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## LATIN AMERICA REVEALS ITSELF IN ITS LITERATURE

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It is part of the creed of democracy that international relations should no longer be the sole concern of governments but of the people themselves. Louis XIV of France could well afford to appoint his own barber an ambassador to a foreign court, since affairs of state at the time often were inspired by family quarrels or family alliances between royal houses. In our days, however, we feel that unless the bulk of public opinion stands at the back of the ruler, diplomatic compacts of one kind or another cannot attain any degree of permanence, even in cases when economic interests appear to benefit by it, for purely material considerations may benefit one group and prove harmful to another within the same country.

In this way the peoples of the Americas have come to believe that cultural forces should be allowed free play in the task of making these large communities harmonize their spiritual aims with the practical one of pooling their natural resources, so that perfect team work will result in resisting aggression against a common enemy. The exchange of representative works of our literatures will make a forceful contribution to that effective interrelation-

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ship. A novel or a poem, like any other piece of true artistic value, is a magic mirror reflecting the inner life of a people with absolute candor and a communicative sympathy. No misgivings as to the wiles of propaganda need hold back the reader, the sincerity and disinterestedness of art being the best guaranty of straight dealing. In the last analysis creative literature may prove the best means to real understanding among distant peoples, if one considers that a too perfect symbol of a foreign nation will never touch our heart as does the intimate knowledge of real human beings, with their failings and shortcomings which make them so much like ourselves.

We are aware of the many attempts made at one time or another to bring Latin-American books in translation to the United States and of the scanty success gained so far. A number of our best writers are just entitled to the attention of the discriminating American reader as some of the authors from this side have proved in the countries to the south. Yet, not a single novelist from Latin America has succeeded in commanding the interest of the American public—I will not say to the extent that Poe, Longfellow, Emerson, Walt Whitman, and a dozen modern Americans are read there, but not even to enjoy the temporary popularity of such second-rate Europeans as Blasco Ibáñez, Papini or Paul Morand in the literary marts of the United States.

If we remember that brother Latin Americans of the painting fraternity, men like Orozco and Rivera, came and conquered, it will help in sustaining our hopes for the discovery of the "great Latin-American novel" in an English translation. It is perhaps true that painting is a more universal language than writing and, as Gauguin observed, that a canvas or a fresco yields at one glance what we may have to scan after prolonged reading from a book translation. With all this, we Latin Americans may be forced to admit, without unduly straining our modesty, but simply by taking a sober, broad view of the matter, that our writers and poets cannot yet reach a parallel degree of formal development and cosmopolitan appeal.

One reason for this slower maturity may be found in the fact that writing has seldom been among us more than a means to an end; it has often been a mere hobby, but in very few instances the exclusive pursuit of a lifetime. Gifted writers in the formative period of our various

nationalities, owing to the scarcity of enlightened leaders, were early pressed into social or political service. Once the actual fighting for national independence was over, they became executives, parliamentarians, diplomats, college professors, or journalists, and oftener than not one individual was forced to fill several of these roles at once. In consequence, their writing was deprived of that concentration of purpose and painstaking execution which have so large a part in attaining mastery over one's calling. Neither can I say that in later times there has appeared in our midst an audience large enough and appreciative enough to spur a literary artist to the greatest exertion of his powers and to compensate him accordingly.

#### DIFFERENT STANDARDS AND OPPOSITE TEMPERAMENTS

I do not mean to imply by this that there is utter isolation between our cultures and no possible bridge for interchange, because, as I have already pointed out, the crossing has been attempted many times. Rather my statement, if found correct, should go to explain why, of the many Latin-American novels already published in translation in the United States, no one so far has been hailed as the key to the other race's soul, as, say, a Russian writer like Gogol or a French one like Voltaire is taken as a paragon of his respective people.

A score or so Latin-American novels have gone through the press in the United States in the last twenty years. Some of them gained a modicum of success for a time and among the enlightened few; but most of them passed on to the common grave of the bargain counter, unsung, and their pages inviolate. These books got no more than the cursory attention paid to the exotic and the merely picturesque. And some of them were the very best that Spanish-American and Brazilian literature had to offer at the time. (I am leaving out of this survey the French writers of Haiti because I am not enough conversant with them.)

The explanation for this indifferent reception is somewhat simple yet full of implications of a more intricate psychology. The self-centered culture of the United States has made its people loath to admit that there is anything really arresting and worth while in countries which fail to present a good show in the realm of economic pros-

perity or political stability. Not knowing anything, aside from sensational newspaper reports, of the peoples to the south, the common man and woman came to the conclusion that these foreigners must be a queer lot, hardly worth the trouble to look into. Speaking alien languages, holding superstitious beliefs, and idling their lives away beyond the steaming jungles, they were impossible neighbors on whom no sparkle of human sympathy should be allowed to go to waste.

At the bottom of the breach there lies something else, something more concrete: alien cultural traditions, making for inimical tastes and corresponding antagonisms of temperament. The lusty, stern accents of the English Bible which pervade the literature in this language have been tempered with the insular humor of a race as bold in act as it is shy in displaying its feelings, and to all that it has added now the swinging vernacular of a youthful people sprawling over the wide fields of English-speaking America. The result has been, as far as we Latin Americans are concerned, that the literary heirs of England on this side often stump us and more often grieve us with their display of mock gravity in discussing the light aspects of life as much as by the deadly seriousness of mien with which they launch their jokes.

Our innate sense of the fitness of things is rudely shaken by your unaccountable behavior. On the other hand, we feel that you do not appreciate enough our love of tearful tirades, interspersed now and then with sensual images or cool, cynical reasoning, for we too pay tribute to the conflicting impulses in human nature by an unsteady reshuffling of effusive sentimentality and intellectual detachment, often expressed in biting sarcasm. We hold truer to our temperament the tendency to protect a sensitive soul under a hard crust of skepticism than we do your elaborate effort at rubbing off a tear with a smile.

#### EARLY ATTEMPTS AT COMMUNICATION

However, time should not be left out as a factor in effacing contrasts of views and blending tendencies toward the shaping of a common New World literature. Similar patterns of life, the democratic upsurge of new talent in the arts, together with the general

stresses and strains of our times, have resulted in writing that seems as hard-boiled and harsh in Latin America as it sounds on the New York stage. Forty years ago it was still possible to translate the idyllic Colombian novel *Maria* for United States readers and to find here many people who admitted liking it well enough. Today there are better chances for the novels of the type of Alegría's *Broad and Alien Is the World* and Gil Gilbert's *Our Bread*, both prize-winners in the recent Farrar & Rinehart Latin-American competition, which take the modern line of writing plainly and robustly about the common plights of the common people.

*Maria* was in fact twice translated, once not too carefully by Rollo Ogden, and again for one of those synoptic student texts for American colleges. The story is but one more Creole version of the timeless romantic affair between a boy and a girl, but its author, Jorge Isaacs, drew from his mixed ancestry of Spanish and Jew a deep feeling of family unity, together with the acute sense of individual tragic destiny. So closely woven with his own life was the story of *Maria* that the author had only to let his memories flow freely for the moving tale to grip the heart of the reader. The idyllic atmosphere of a patriarchal manor in the lush valley of Cali in Colombia turns in the end to a contrasting backdrop for one of those elegiac romances dear to the Spanish temperament. For we love a sad ending to our story as much as your reader of current fiction yearns for a happy one. At least I can say that we did, before the movies and radio entered with blaring trumpets the conventional seclusion of our post-colonial life. Often a young or not so young woman met another in the street, on the way to the market or back from early Mass, in any town or village in Latin America, and soon the conversation would take a turn like this: "By the way, have you read such and such a novel? No? I want you to read it. I'll let you have it. Read it by all means. It is the saddest, most beautiful story I ever saw. You too will enjoy it; it made me cry all night!"

From the peaceful haunts of a Colombian community, where men with well-combed whiskers would sit the night through discussing some fine point of grammar, the subtleties of semantics, or the antics of etymology, to the sunny, merry portals and plazas of Lima in Peru, there really lies a whole world of difference. The city was from its

very beginning the metropolis of Colonial Spanish America. A chronicler assures us that under the vice-royalty Lima boasted of something like seven thousand private carriages, and owning one in those days probably meant much more than the two-car family garage nowadays. Coddled by a balmy climate, pampered by luxury, and with a wealth of time to be spent every day in gossip and repartee, Limeños grew to be the cockiest, sharpest-tongued Creoles of the lot. As in the Rome of the popes, epigram and satire flourished in public places as well as in the privacy of the drawing-room. Popular wit dubbed one of the city squares "Plaza of Merchants and Robbers," and a blind alley, "Get-Out-if-You-Can" (*Sal si Puedes*). An alert air, a wink, and a sharp rejoinder are to this day the living trade-mark of Peruvian ways and manners. Peruvians love to offer the foreign visitor who qualifies as a table guest a dish of *seviche*, which is fish swimming in a thick sauce of red pepper. They follow with the greatest interest his facial reactions to the hot stimulant. Likewise, their talk and writings are no less highly seasoned.

There was born toward the middle of the last century a boy of humble parentage who, on reaching his teens, entered journalism and politics as his natural avocation. One day he wrote a short piece of retrospective gossip and put it under the general title of "*Tradiciones*." It was neither straight history nor pure fancy, but a new brand of playful recollection, such as seems to hang in festive or gruesome fashion from every balcony in the renowned City of the Kings. It was as if one of those gentlemen dressed in stiff black cloaks or one of the veiled old women who haunt the Lima of today had taken our author by the arm and pointed to one of the latticed-window mansions thereabouts, saying: "Do you see that house yonder? Well, there lived, my grandmother told me, a most charming girl, with the most insanely jealous father or husband. . . ." And then a story full of devious meaning, pointed by popular sentences and bits of homely philosophy, unwinds itself from the sharp pen of our author, Ricardo Palma.

Such is the case of the most Limeño of all Peruvians, who, starting on this virgin literary path at thirty, was kept to it by public acclaim for nearly threescore years. He wrote hundreds of "*tradiciones*," some as long as a novelette, some a mere anecdote from the unburied

past, but most of them bristling with sprightly remarks and inexhaustible verbiage. They tell of the grotesque if often bloody encounters between religious pageants carrying sacred images in the streets of Lima, when the old argument as to which was the most efficient miracle-worker flared up again amid the sweeping stabs of candlesticks and crosses. They dwell, with many malignant asides, on the human frailties of some old viceroy or marquis, or they make light of the ponderous style of an *oidor*, a fanatical preacher, or a physician who disguised his ignorance by aiming at his patient with a broadside of Latin jargon. The stories of Palma are the Creole version of the Spanish picaresque novel, whose counterpart in Mexico was "Periquillo Sarniento." Yet the *novela picaresca* can be as grim and moralizing as any serious genre, whereas Ricardo Palma never will be.

#### A FOLK EPIC OF THE PAMPAS

In *Martín Fierro*, the Gaucho poem of José Hernández, we come to grips with a work of Creole literature already shorn of the formal Spanish garment. When Walter Owen made his version into English, he hit the right note by translating it into the earthy, swaggering lingo of the cowboy. A similar habitat and corresponding ways of life made the Argentine Gaucho of the pampas as self-reliant and independent a horseman as his American counterpart. The wish expressed in the Creole stanza ending with

Entiérrreme en campo verde  
Donde me pise el ganado

is almost a literal transcription of the well-known

Bury me out on the lone prairie.

The men of the Argentine pampas, hedged in on one side by the savagery of the Indian and by the snares of the growing city on the other, lived a restless, forlorn life. Song became man's boon companion, his guitar the vicarious semblance of a mate. He had to follow the cattle in their migrations of weeks and months in search of fresh grass. Being dismounted on these interminable plains was a worse plight than shipwreck on the high seas. Feats of horsemanship, together with the ability to make a path for himself in life at the point of his *facón*, if necessary, were his chief claims to individual

distinction, unless he too could aspire to a place among the impromptu poets and singers in the verbal duel of the *contrapunto*. A strong arm and a ready wit were the marks of a born leader among the Gauchos.

Martín Fierro, the hero of the poem, stands for the ideal and symbol of Creole manhood. Persecution from the civil authorities and abuse from the military, added to the score of some private quarrels, as the result of which more than one man has been missing since, sends Fierro reluctantly to hide among the wild tribes of Patagonia. There he rescues a white woman from the lust of a savage, but not before he has killed him in a fight depicted for us with the direct, throbbing language of a rustic Homer. Using the vernacular with masterly resourcefulness and drawing for his images and figures of speech from the everyday lore of his people, the poet attains a felicity of expression and a freshness of description that are life itself.

No other work of Spanish-American literature has secured the wide and lasting popularity of this Gaucho epic—an epic not only in the sense that it deals with the life of a whole people but mainly because the common people have recognized themselves in it, they love to quote, in the pithy sayings of the poet, what he had rescued in rough shapes out of the native folklore. More still, Hernández' masterpiece, by casting the type of the Gaucho into a work of art just at the psychological moment when pastoral life was already on the wane, thus endowed it with a romantic halo of nobility, which in our days has found expression in the common saying of the Argentines: "*Ché, hacéme una Gauchada!*" whenever they wish someone to do them a good turn. As if one were to say in similar circumstances out West: "Brother, be a real cowboy to me!"

#### A VOICE OF WARNING FROM BRAZIL

I wish there were room here to deal with another Spanish-American writer of outstanding worth, the Argentine Sarmiento, whose chief work, an impaling biography of the Gaucho chieftain Facundo Quiroga (and in a slanting way of Dictator Rosas, the master of them all), is in fine the portrait of a whole nation in the making. Moreover, I should like to discuss the book because in a well-meaning way it was sadly misrepresented by the widow of Horace Mann

when she translated its lusty invectives into the dainty prattle of a Boston bluestocking. But it should suffice for the moment to say that, in the book I am about to write, the Brazilian Euclides da Cunha acknowledged his inspiration to Facundo for the Argentine's prophetic insight into the dormant forces of savagery and fanaticism still lurking in the midst of the New World.

The Brazilian author of "Os Sertões" was a young army engineer at the point of starting on a precarious civilian career in São Paulo, when he was offered the chance of joining a scientific expedition to the Peruvian frontier, two thousand miles away. Brazilians are born as a rule in what we may call the front garden of their huge national estate and seldom risk an acquaintance with the expanse of swamplands, jungle, and lonely wastes of the inland *sertão*. Da Cunha had also a glimpse of Amazonia—in his own pictorial words, "a land not made yet ready for the arrival of man."

Slavery had just been abolished in Brazil, the republic was established, and a sensitive, easy-going people were started on the hard road to democratic self-rule. Soon after, in 1894, grotesque rumors referring to an obscure agitator preaching war against the "infidel" republican government began to spread from the hinterland of the state of Bahia, scarcely five hundred miles north of Rio, the capital. A ne'er-do-well sort of a fellow by the name of Maciel, but now under the meaningful appellation of Conselheiro (the Counselor), had started months before at the head of a band of men and women of his ilk to restore the rule of Christianity undefiled and to put down what he termed "the religion of the dog," modern democracy. Carrying an oversize wooden cross before him, this *Rasputin avant la lettre*, this sort of Hitler in reverse, swept with his motley army down toward the coast, defeating with nothing more than hoes and pitchforks the detachments of police sent against them by the incredulous governor of the state. When finally the central powers awoke to the seriousness of the revolt, Conselheiro, followed by thousands of fanatics, had moved north and inland once more, until he came to pitch camp at the junction of two rivers, in a place called Cañudos.

Euclides da Cunha was sent at his own request as an observer with one of these military expeditions, strong in field artillery and

led by the most popular young soldier in the federal army. He soon became convinced that the unbelievable was true, that a mob, half-starved, devoid of all training and effective weapons to resist, had utterly destroyed a mixed force sent against them, and had spiked its leader's head by the roadside. A herd of huts shepherded by the twin massive towers of the temple made up the Mecca of the wild prophet. It took six months for the army to reduce the place, and, when the final assault carried the soldiers into the stockade, the surviving women and children charged them with pots of scalding water and a hail of rubble. Conselheiro had been dead for months, but his immediate entourage had kept it secret. Most of the men had been killed or starved to death, and the very few surviving came to meet the enemy, took hold of the nooses prepared for them, and hung themselves eagerly.

The author of *Os Sertões* duly reported these happenings to the papers in Rio and São Paulo. But being, like Sarmiento, a born writer, if such inborn ability is admitted to exist, he too saw far beyond that. He perceived how thin is the crust of civilization on which present-day mankind treads and, again like the author of *Facundo*, went to wrestle with the mighty forces that mold a people out of the combined pressure of soil, climate, means of life, ideas, and beliefs. The result was a revealing, thought-provoking, and all-embracing survey of the moral map of Brazil—of the New World, perhaps. And from the point of view of both form and spirit, Da Cunha's descriptive book is generally held as one of the most brilliant pieces of writing in Brazilian letters—a fountainhead for a whole generation to dip their pens into.

#### A LITERARY PILGRIMAGE

Two Brazilian novelists have already been introduced to the American public, but I cannot say that either of them has left a memorable impression here. That melancholy humorist, Machado de Assis, the author of *The Memoirs of Braz Cubas* and *Don Casmurro* has been compared to Anatole France for the very human reason that he had none of the Frenchman's vitriolic irreverence and hardly anything of his aloofness toward the creatures of fancy. In the other instance we are confronted with a virtuoso of literary aesthetics, the

novelist Graça Aranha, who in *Canaan* tried to blend his conception of the New World, made into an ideal melting pot for the whole of mankind, with a background of frenetic, almost gory, display of primeval nature. The result was that these authors, when their works were published in the United States, fell between two stools, that is, they could not compete with the works of the European masters for that portion of the American public that appreciates artistic excellence; neither could they please the demand for swift action and the lure of an exciting plot with which one is expected to conquer the million-strong magazine readers.

Experiences of a similar kind befell the other Latin-American top writers made available to the American public in the course of these last twenty years. It appears that nothing less than the brooding genius of a Tolstoy or the sinful indiscretions of the authors of modern biography will be required to yank the American reader away from his aboriginal yarns. Or is it that for Latin-American authors to crash the gate here, they will first have to dress an original theme with transparent simplicity of form and the wide range of ideas of a master of the craft?

In more recent years some authors of the day, such as the Colombian Eustasio Rivera, author of *The Vortex*, the Uruguayan Horacio Quiroga, and the Mexican Azuela have enjoyed a passing recognition from certain sectors of the American public. Rivera's narrative was a gripping social document, incidentally destined to show how men of our own time, as soon as they entered the rubber jungle of the Amazon basin, turned more savagely cruel than any wild tribe might appear to the imagination of a missionary's wife. Also the inside view Azuela gave us of revolutionary strife and of what goes on in the mind of the professional *guerrillero* went further and deeper than the ordinary picture of these collective phenomena.

And with all this against us, I still feel bound to hold hope and a promise for the future. Latin America is a land of infinite possibilities in more ways than one. Men and women live there whose lives are fit to be written and read with passionate interest, provided the teller of the tale happens to have the eye and the pulse of a William Henry Hudson. Perhaps, after all, the great Latin-American novel is just around the corner!

## THE PROPHETIC MIND OF HENRY ADAMS

HERBERT EDWARDS<sup>1</sup>

In June, 1897, he predicted the first and second world-wars, writing: "For the last generation, since 1865, Germany has been the great disturbing element of the world, and until its expansive force is decidedly exhausted, I see neither political nor economical equilibrium possible." In August of 1901 he called Germany "a powder magazine" and said: "All her neighbors are in terror for fear she will explode, and, sooner or later, explode she must." In January, 1904, he predicted the Russian revolution: "I am half crazy with fear that Russia is sailing straight into another French revolution which may upset all Europe and us, too." In the previous year, 1903, he had declared: "My figures coincide in fixing 1950 as the year when the world must go to smash."<sup>2</sup>

Almost fifteen years before the outbreak of World War I this former professor of history at Harvard who had moved to Washington from his native Boston in order to be at the center of things and who visited Europe every year had found "complete moral debacle" on the Continent and had said: "I stand aghast before one of the most dangerous cataclysms the world has ever seen. . . . I have bored you all with my fears; and now I see the circus beginning." He was particularly impressed by the moral decadence in France: "Talk about our American nerves! They are normal and healthy compared with the nerves of the French, which are more diseased than anything on earth. . . . In all Paris—literature, theatre, art, people, and cuisine—I have not yet seen one healthy new thing." In 1891, writing from Paris, he said: "At every interval of years I come back here with a wider experience of men and knowledge of races, and always the impression becomes stronger that, of all people in the world, the French are the most gratuitously wicked." At the

<sup>1</sup> Instructor, department of English, Ohio State University.

<sup>2</sup> *The Letters of Henry Adams*, ed. W. C. Ford (2 vols.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin: Vol. I, 1930; Vol. II, 1938), II, 129, 344, 393.

time of the Dreyfus affair he would have consigned Zola to Devil's Island "for his novels," together "with as much more French rot as the island would hold, including most of the press, and the greater part of the theatre, with all the stockbrokers."<sup>3</sup>

Henry Adams found one good in the evil of inevitably approaching world-war—greater Anglo-American unity. The events in Europe would bring about what the Adams family had tried in vain to accomplish for two hundred years: "frighten England into America's arms." And almost the only optimistic note in that classic of disillusionment, his *Education*, is this prospect of closer ties between England and the United States: "For the first time in his life, he felt a sense of possible purpose working itself out in history . . . he could see that the family work fell at once into the grand perspective of true empire building."<sup>4</sup> Historians have always given a great deal of credit to Charles Francis Adams, the father of Henry, for averting war with England during the first year of the Civil War; he shares with Lincoln and the Prince Consort the honor of having prevented Seward and Lord John Russell from perpetrating this crime against civilization. Yet the part played by the prescient Henry Adams, secretary to his father in London, in the father's great work has largely passed unnoticed. In a letter to his brother in Boston, Henry described Seward's dispatches as "arrogant in tone" and "extraordinary and unparalleled" in their demands, and declared that he regarded the policy of the Secretary of State as "shallow madness." He continued: "It's not only a crime; it's a blunder. I have done my best to counteract it. I urged papa this morning as the only man who could by any chance stop the thing, to make an energetic effort and induce the British Government to put us so much in the wrong that we couldn't go further. I think he has made up his mind to something of the sort, and I hope it will succeed with all my soul."<sup>5</sup>

During the years Adams spent in Washington he was the constant companion and adviser of John Hay. Every day the two friends

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 534; II, 179, 551.

<sup>4</sup> Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1918), p. 363.

<sup>5</sup> *Letters*, I, 93.

went for an hour's walk together, followed by tea at Hay's house. It was Hay who commissioned St. Gaudens to make a bronze medallion of his friend—the scholarly and distinguished head of Adams encircled by a sunburst of porcupine quills and inscribed: "Henricus Adams Porcupinus Angelicus." What part Adams had in determining Hay's policy as secretary of state remains open to conjecture, but it is significant that Adams declares in the *Education* that he regarded Hay's work in drawing England and America closer together as the crowning masterpiece of the endeavors of the Adams family for Anglo-American co-operation.

The high regard in which Adams' opinion on men and affairs was held by the ablest statesmen and diplomats in Washington is illustrated by the fact that when Woodrow Wilson was catapulted from comparative political obscurity to the presidency in 1912, the first person consulted by the brilliant and experienced British ambassador, Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, was Henry Adams. What could Adams tell him about this new man, Woodrow Wilson? Adams' reply in the light of future events was startling in its prophetic significance: "If anyone asks you about him you are safe in saying that Mr. Wilson is a College Professor. I cannot write a paper to show that a Professor is by essence incapable of acting with other men." The tragedy of Woodrow Wilson's life was implicit in that brief statement—and perhaps a greater, a world-tragedy, was there too. As for the astute Sir Cecil, the American college professor was to be his nemesis. The charming Englishman, universally liked, with hosts of friends in the principal capitals of the world, was later to be summarily dismissed from his post—and to die shortly afterward of humiliation and disgrace—because he could not get along with Woodrow Wilson.

Important as Adams felt co-operation between the two great democracies to be, yet more important still was an adjustment of all mankind to the machine age. Modern progress seemed to him material progress only, with negligible intellectual and spiritual progress; there was only a vast increase in the energy at the disposal of man without a concomitant increase in man's ability to control this energy and turn it into beneficent channels. He said: "What is the end of doubling up our steam and electric power every five years to

infinity if we don't increase thought power? As I see it, the society of today shows no more thought power than in our youth, though it showed precious little then. To me, the whole lesson lies in this experiment: Can our society double up its mind capacity? It must do it or die; and I see no reason why it may not widen its consciousness of complex conditions far enough to escape wreck; but it must hurry."<sup>6</sup>

Adams was a full generation ahead of his time in his disillusionment with the ideals of the Industrial Revolution and its high hopes of material progress and of happiness to be obtained through material comforts. At the time Huxley was proclaiming the wonderful benefits that would accrue to humanity as a result of scientific discovery Adams was almost the only American who raised his voice in protest. In the mid-seventies, when the faith in science was at its height, he said: "I firmly believe that before many centuries more, science will be the master of man. The engines he will have invented will be beyond his strength to control. Some day science may have the existence of mankind in its power, and the human race commit suicide by blowing up the world."<sup>7</sup> Again in 1902 he said: "My belief is that science is to wreck us, and that we are like monkeys monkeying with a loaded shell; we don't in the least know or care where our practically infinite energies come from or will bring us to."<sup>8</sup>

In England in the eighties Matthew Arnold had fired his ringing shot of protest against the progressive dehumanization of life and culture by science and had lapsed into silence:

Let them have it how they will!  
Thou art tired; best be still.

But in the United States Henry Adams was not silent: his *Education* was published in 1913 and *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* in the year of his death, 1918—the *Education* picturing the chaos of the age of science, *Mont-Saint-Michel* the unity of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, before science and socialism had been substi-

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 469.

<sup>7</sup> *A Cycle of Adams Letters, 1861-65*, ed. W. C. Ford (2 vols.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1920), I, 135.

<sup>8</sup> *Letters*, II, 392.

tuted for religious faith. The two classics really constitute one whole—a masterly criticism of the modern world, with its revolutionary instability and its incessant social disintegration. The remedy for the disease was implicit in the contrast: a return on the part of the modern world, not to the outmoded dogmas of a dead theology, but to the spirit of human sympathy and mutual understanding that was an outgrowth of the old religious faith as that faith was exemplified in the Virgin. To Adams the Virgin symbolized Love, a love that the modern man had lost in his slavery to mechanical necessity; only if Love were regained could he recover a sense of human relation with his fellow-man, a sense of human responsibility. But today he is in the grip of the terrible devil of impersonality—the machine has dehumanized him. The idea was finally and beautifully expressed by Adams in a poem found in his wallet after his death, the "Prayer to the Virgin of Chartres":

But when, like me, he too has trod the track  
Which leads him up to power above control,  
He too will have no choice but wander back  
And sink in helpless hopelessness of soul,

Before your majesty of grace and love,  
The purity, the beauty and the faith;  
The depth of tenderness beneath; above,  
The glory of the life and of the death.

Carl and Mark Van Doren, in their *American and British Literature since 1890*, have stated that Adams "initiated the period of self-criticism through which the country has been passing since then."<sup>9</sup> It is undeniable that the dominant trend in American literature since Adams' death in 1918 has followed the note of protest against a mechanistic and materialistic civilization sounded by Henry Adams. The novels of Sinclair Lewis, of Theodore Dreiser, of Sherwood Anderson, established the tone of social criticism which was to dominate the fiction of the post-war period and which is still the dominant note of our present-day literature (as witness in Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* the impassioned and despairing cry of humanity against its enslavement by fascism, whose funda-

<sup>9</sup> See also the chapter on Henry Adams in Cargill, *Intellectual America* (New York: Macmillan, 1941).

mental principle is the subservience of the individual to machinery, the creation of nations of robots). It is probably safe to say that serious modern American drama began with O'Neill, whose earliest important play, *The Hairy Ape*, told the tragic story of the losing struggle of the working classes to save the integrity and dignity of the individual in a world dominated by the machine. T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) struck the note in poetry that has been resounding ever since: the chaos, the shattered ideals, the barren frustration, the lost faith and hope of the nameless millions in our dreary industrial life. Undoubtedly there was a special appeal to the literary artist in Henry Adams' masterpieces; implicit in the *Education* and explicit in the *Mont-Saint-Michel* was the nostalgic longing of the literary artist in all ages for a better world, an ideal habitation for mankind. The idealist in Henry Adams spoke to the idealist in every artist.

Adams believed that the greatest single danger to society was the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few, and the consequent abuse of power by the strong and rich. The mistletoe of a capitalistic society, whose roots were not in the soil but in the tree, constituted the greatest danger to that society—and the mistletoe was finance. When a democracy becomes a financial-industrial oligarchy in which wealth gives a political influence far out of proportion to the number of those possessing it, the social structure of such a democracy is in danger of collapse. Any kind of class rule based upon special privilege, whether of financiers, industrialists, or labor unions, he felt was fatal to the principles of a true democracy. In November, 1893, he declared: "As for me, I am, beyond all political measure, tired of being ruled by fat-headed or other sculpins who are themselves ruled by a pack of howling liars and thieves on the stock exchange." And again in 1896: "The press is the hired agent of a monied system, and set up for no other purpose than to tell lies where its interests are involved. One can trust nobody and nothing. As far as my observation goes, society is today more rotten than at any time within my personal knowledge. The Church never was as rotten as the stock exchange now is." In 1897 he predicted: "As I view it, the collapse of our nineteenth century J. S. Mill, Manchester, Chicago formulas will be displayed—if at all—by the col-

lapse of Parliamentarianism and the reversion to centralised government. The open abandonment of the system ought to be nearly simultaneous in Germany and France. It must coincide with social disintegration."<sup>10</sup>

In the United States it was the Grant administration which definitely marked the beginning of the corrupt alliance between finance and the politician, in Adams' opinion. Years afterward (1911) he said: "I have always considered that Grant wrecked my own life, and the last hope or chance of lifting society back to a reasonably high plane. Grant's administration is to me the dividing line between what we hoped and what we have got."<sup>11</sup>

"Grant's administration wrecked my own life." This sentence contains the key to the paradox in the life of Henry Adams: a man supremely gifted in political knowledge and vision, with a background and training in statesmanship such as has fallen to the lot of few Americans before or since, a man who wanted with all his heart to give his life in unselfish service to his country as all the Adams line had done, was condemned to be only "a stable companion to statesmen."<sup>12</sup> "All he wanted was something to support; something that would let itself be supported. Luck went dead against him. For once, he was fifty years in advance of his time."<sup>13</sup> For once Henry Adams was mistaken: had he been born in the eighteenth century instead of the nineteenth, before American democracy had abandoned its natural leaders, the real statesmen, men of genuine ability, men of knowledge, of integrity and vision, in favor of politicians, demagogues, tools of privileged classes or of special classes, he would have had the opportunity to serve his country. But with Grant's administration America had ceased to be a real democracy; the era of rule by pressure groups had already begun—rule at first by the powerful financiers and industrialists and then by czars of labor no less rapacious than the Goulds and the Vanderbilts. "Power was what he wanted," says a recent writer,

<sup>10</sup> *Letters*, II, 34, 99, 123.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 575; see also *Education*, p. 262.

<sup>12</sup> William Roscoe Thayer, *The Life and Letters of John Hay* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1915), p. 54.

<sup>13</sup> *Education*, p. 267.

R. P. Blackmur, in his book, *The Expense of Greatness* (1940), "but power on his own terms: the terms of his training."<sup>14</sup> And that training was the training of the Adams family—integrity, old-fashioned rectitude, independence, education, high and unyielding principles.

Despite the severity of his criticism of the politics of the democracy of his time in his *Letters* and especially in his novel *Democracy* (1880), no one had a deeper faith in the democratic form of government than Adams. This faith is expressed by one of the characters in *Democracy*: "I believe in democracy. I accept it. I believe in it because it appears to me the inevitable consequence of what has gone before it. Democracy asserts the fact that the masses are now raised to a higher intelligence than formerly. All our civilisation aims at this mark. We want to do what we can to help it. I myself want to see the result. I grant it is an experiment, but it is the only direction society can take that is worth taking, the only conception of its duty large enough to satisfy its instincts; the only result that is worth an effort or a risk. Every other possible step is backward, and I do not care to repeat the past. I am glad to see society grapple with issues in which no one can afford to be neutral."

Democracy was a cause in which he fervently believed and which all the elements of his being called upon him to serve. A compelling sense of innate vocation, a family tradition of distinguished service to the state in the highest offices it had to offer—his great-grandfather a president, his grandfather a president, his father ambassador to England—proved ability of the highest order, as his judgments on the affairs of politics and statecraft so abundantly prove—all urged him on to take the active leadership in the government that his forebears had assumed by natural right. But paradoxically it was this very tradition which kept him out. It was the stern, upright Puritan tradition of his ancestors which prevented him from stooping to the men and methods by which the nation was now ruled. In 1860 he exclaimed in youthful enthusiasm: "Washington is the place my education has fitted me best for, and where I could be of most

<sup>14</sup> R. P. Blackmur, *The Expense of Greatness* (New York: Arrow Editions, 1940), p. 257.

use."<sup>15</sup> But a few years later: "I suppose every man who has looked on at the game of politics has been struck by the remarkable way in which politics deteriorate the moral tone of everyone who mixes in them. The deterioration is far more marked than in any other occupation I know except the turf, stock-jobbing, and gambling." The fact was that Henry Adams, able to the point of genius, with the prophetic vision possessed only by the great statesmen, was an anachronism, born out of his due time. In 1903 he wrote to his brother Charles: "After all, we were educated politically, and, as far as I can see, the world has made little or no gain politically. We have had no dividends and no profit from our investment. Reform proved a total loss, and abstract morality went into bankruptcy with the Church. All our ideals turned out to be relative."<sup>16</sup>

Adams could not take his rightful place among the leaders of the nation—the times were out of joint. But his judgments concerning men and movements had the mystical authenticity of a great seer. He was a poet in Matthew Arnold's sense—an artist, a philosopher, and a prophet whose work was a criticism of life.

What of his judgment of literature—of belles-lettres. It, too, we can see today, was as amazingly prescient and prophetic as his political and historical predictions. In 1863, writing from England to his brother Charles in Boston, Adams highly recommended the poetry of Clough, whose work is now much more extensively represented in anthologies than formerly (see the recently published Oxford anthology and note the new edition of Clough's poems) and whose poem "Say Not the Struggle Naught Availeth" formed the very effective climax of a recent radio address by Winston Churchill. In the *Education*, Adams "thought Matthew Arnold the best form of expression of his time."<sup>17</sup> We can test the accuracy of Adams' judgment here by asking ourselves the question: Which of all the Victorian essayists would you recommend today to a college student who wanted a model of English prose style? You would not recommend the turgid and fantastic style of Carlyle or the flowery and pretty style of Ruskin or the whimsical style of Lamb or the purple prose of De Quincey; all these men are outmoded. Arnold alone,

<sup>15</sup> *Letters*, I, 61.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 417.

<sup>17</sup> P. 358.

with his lucidity, his objectivity, his cool, calm logic, his devastating irony, his masterful understatement, is a model for today and for tomorrow.

Nothing shows the timeless, universal quality, the sense of Jovian omniscience, in Adams' literary discernment better than his reply to Henry Cabot Lodge, when that young man, in an article in the *North American Review* in 1875, had called the eighteenth century a century of "dust and ashes" in respect to literature. Adams said: "I am sorry you think so poorly of Gray, whom I rank very high indeed. . . . Everyone now snubs the last century, and I see that Stephen considers Scott to be poor stuff. I confess I do think Pope a poet, and Gray, too, and Cowper, and Goldsmith."<sup>18</sup>

It is not surprising that the young man who wrote from London in 1867 to his brother in the United States ". . . therefore if you hear of anything that owns a voice and not an echo; that talks itself and not Dante or Tennyson, send it me,"<sup>19</sup> should, in 1869, be one of the few American discoverers of Whitman. At a time when an influential American magazine was calling Whitman's poetry "a compound of New England Transcendentalism and New York rowdy," Adams, in a letter to his English friend, Charles Milnes Gaskell, was advising him to read Whitman.<sup>20</sup> At that time only a very few Americans—Emerson, Thoreau, and a handful of others—foresaw that Whitman was to become the most influential voice in American poetry in the following century.<sup>21</sup> In what is perhaps the most important recent work in the field of American literary criticism, F. O. Matthiessen's *American Renaissance* (1941), in which Matthiessen has dealt only with the greatest determining forces of modern American literature, the five men of letters chosen are Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville—and Whitman.

For seven years, as a young man, Henry Adams was a professor at Harvard. Here he was far in advance of his period in teaching methods. The system that prevailed at Harvard when Adams came

<sup>18</sup> *Letters*, I, 269.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.

<sup>21</sup> Ernest Rhys, in his recent autobiography, *Wales England Wed* (1940), relates an amusing incident of a lecture of his before the fashionable Cosmopolitan Club in New York in 1889, in which praise of Whitman aroused the hostility of "the folk who looked upon Walt Whitman as little better than an outrageous old vagabond."

there was not greatly different from that described by Charles Francis Adams, his brother, when he entered Harvard as a freshman: "The educational trouble with Harvard in my time was the total absence of touch and personal influence as between student and instructor. The academic schoolmaster system prevailed; and, outside of the recitation room, it was not good form—it was contrary to usage—for the instructors and the instructed to hold personal relations. Our professors were a set of rather eminent scholars and highly respectable men. They attended to their duties with commendable assiduity, and drudged along in a dreary humdrum sort of way in a stereotyped method of classroom instruction. But as far as giving direction to, in the sense of shaping the individual minds of young men in their most plastic stage, so far as I know, nothing of the kind was even dreamed of; it never entered the professorial mind."<sup>22</sup> In October of his first year as teacher at Harvard (1870), Henry Adams wrote: "I don't believe in the system in which I am made a part, and thoroughly dislike and despise the ruling theories of education in the university. . . . I am writing this at a faculty meeting, and there is not a student here who would feel less at home in the company than I do."<sup>23</sup>

What new system did Adams introduce? For one thing, a seminar in which there was active discussion and in which opposition to Adams' own views was welcomed. Henry Cabot Lodge, one of his students, said, years later, in his *Early Memories*: "In all my four years I never really studied anything, never had my mind roused to any exertion or to anything resembling active thought until in my senior year I stumbled into the course in medieval history given by Henry Adams, who had just come to Harvard. He had the power not only of exciting interest, but he awakened opposition to his own views, and that is one great secret of success in teaching. For the first time I got a glimpse of what education might be and really learned something. I discovered that it was the keenest of pleasures to use one's mind, a new sensation."<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Charles Francis Adams, Jr., *Autobiography* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1916), p. 35.

<sup>23</sup> *Letters*, I, 195.

<sup>24</sup> Henry Cabot Lodge, *Early Memories* (New York: Scribner, 1913), pp. 186-87.

The close personal relationship between teacher and student which Adams established is best exemplified in his lifelong friendship with Henry Cabot Lodge. Long after Lodge's student days were over he came to Adams for advice and counsel about matters ranging from the choice of a career to the acquiring of a good English style. Twenty years later "Uncle" Henry Adams was to be found with Lodge's boys touring France to see the cathedrals, teaching them the glory and the beauty of the long-dead medieval world as he had taught their father before them. To the end of his life Adams continued to regard himself as a teacher. In 1912, four years before his death at the age of eighty, he wrote to a discouraged young teacher: "Just one line to say that, while I sympathise with your sense of solitude in your field of teaching, I can so far offer you encouragement as to say that I have gone on teaching for a small matter of fifty years more or less, and have never yet found any sympathy anywhere, or encouragement from anybody, in any of my numerous experiments, and I greatly doubt whether any other teacher has done better. There is, in our modern society, a singular want of solidarity—a lack of purpose and direction—which you and I are not responsible for, and cannot counteract. We are not the only victims."<sup>25</sup>

No one would listen to him—this paradoxical prophet, born out of his due time, striving to set the crooked straight. Even the liberals of his own day sneered at him. Said Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes to Owen Wister: "If the country had put him on a pedestal, I think Henry Adams with his gifts could have rendered distinguished service." Wister asked: "What was the matter with Henry Adams?" Holmes said: "He wanted it handed to him on a silver plate." Few of the estimates were favorable. William MacDonald called the *Education* "an extraordinary record of intellectual and moral aimlessness crossed with inherited inhibitions." His brother, Brooks Adams, said of him: "Henry was never quite frank with himself or with others." James Russell Lowell: "The Adamses have a genius for saying even a gracious thing in an ungracious way." Robert Morss Lovett: "He was an instrument too finely wrought, too delicately adjusted for the rough work of everyday life." Carl

<sup>25</sup> *Letters*, II, 593.

Becker quotes a friend who saw Adams in Paris toward the end of his life: "His habitual attitude was that of a man who somehow feels that he has missed out, does not really *believe* that he *has* missed out, and at the same time cannot quite understand why he should have missed out or feel that he *has*." Sir Cecil Spring-Rice: "He was a rather interesting sort of cynic." Brooks Adams again: "What he really cared for was social consideration." Often the estimates were contradictory: Mabel La Farge: "The Uncle was emotional himself. He was passionately fond of poetry." Gamaliel Bradford: "What shall be said of a man who in recounting his own life up to thirty makes no single mention of having his pulses stirred, of being hurled out of himself by nature, or love, or poetry, or God?"

There were few to love him and very few to praise. They "could not figure him out." His almost morbid shyness precluded popularity and prevented him from making friends. "It is wonderful, stupendous, to consider how a man who in his own mind is cool, witty, unaffected and high-toned will disgust and mortify himself by every word he utters, or act he does, when he steps out of his skin defenses," he had said of himself. As far as the ordinary social relations of life are concerned he was a victim of an extreme inferiority complex: "Self-depreciation has always been my vice, and morbid self-contempt my moral weakness, as it was that of the 12th century mystics, which is the bond of sympathy between us." Only with very close friends and with children could he feel completely at ease. Mabel La Farge recalls his love of children: "One can recall the tenderness in his voice as he would repeat 'thou little child, on whom those truths do rest which we are toiling all our lives to find.' But what stranger could guess at the humility and self-abasement with which he would turn from his great thoughts and ponderous volumes to become an admiring and awe-inspired playmate of the tiniest child that walked into his study."

To himself and to most of the world he was a skeptic and a cynic; the mysterious and enigmatic figure which he had St. Gaudens erect on the grave of Marian Adams seemed to confirm the popular belief. And there were his own words, besides the implication of the *Education*: "I always was a good deal of a sceptic and speculator in theories, and think precious small potatoes of man in general and

myself in particular." Had he not said at Hay's death: "As for me, he and I took life as an amusement, not too serious. . . ." William Roscoe Thayer, a good friend, said of him in his *Life and Letters of John Hay*: "Fate, he sees, has played a sardonic trick on him—and on all of us—in summoning us into life; but the jest becomes all the more sardonic for him, because he, unlike the majority, sees that it is a jest and nothing more." On more than one occasion he had called himself "an oriental fatalist" and had said: "I never try to stop any man from doing anything—or woman either. They act as Brahma wills, and I not less so."

But it was this skeptic who said: "For, after all, man knows mighty little, and may some day learn enough of his own ignorance to fall down on his knees again and pray." And it was this skeptic who, in his novel *Esther*, the novel he "wrote with his heart's blood," declared: "Esther had learned to look on the physical life . . . as the unreal part of existence . . . perhaps she had for this short instant a flash of truth, and by the light of her father's deathbed, saw life as it really is . . . nothing seemed real except the imagination, and nothing true but the spiritual." Finally, it was this skeptic who, in one of the most moving religious poems in the language, "Prayer to the Virgin of Chartres," wrote:

Help me to see! not with my mimic sight—  
With yours! which carried radiance, like the sun,  
Giving the rays you saw with—light in light—  
Tying all suns and stars and worlds in one.

Help me to know! not with my mocking art—  
With you, who knew yourself unbound by laws;  
Gave God your strength, your life, your sight, your heart,  
And took from him the Thought that Is—the Cause.

To his own generation—and perhaps even to himself—he was a paradox. To ours he perhaps still is a paradox, but certainly a prophet.

## ESSAYS IN MINIATURE

ANDREW J. GREEN<sup>1</sup>

### THE RESISTLESS EYE

Few details of poetry possess a fascination more extraordinary than Coleridge's thrice-repeated use of the mesmeric power of the human eye. For the early Coleridge the theme was not merely a poetic medium for his doctrine of philosophical passivity but a romantic obsession, and close attention to his use of it in "The Ancient Mariner," "Christabel," and "Kubla Khan" repays itself in a perception still further heightened of the poetic quality of these most poetic of poems.

The omniscient author works the spell upon the reader, but the Mariner, subject for the hour to some holy, overwhelming power, detains the Wedding Guest by his "glittering eye" alone. The device is audacious and eminently satisfying: audacious because it promises a tale that will hold the reader as powerless as the Wedding Guest, satisfying because it so completely effects the illusion of reality. Thoroughly unconvincing, in comparison, is the setting for *Lord Jim* and *Wuthering Heights*, for Captain Marlowe and Nellie Deans possessed no dread, enchanting eye to bind their auditors. And it is a mere shift of adjective—"glittering eye," "the Mariner, whose eyes are bright," "bright-eyed Mariner"—that maintains the emphasis throughout.

In "The Ancient Mariner" merely the frame, but in "Christabel" the story itself, depends upon this optical thaumaturgy. It is essentially the enchantment of the sinister eye of the Lady Geraldine that bewitches Christabel—for "nothing else saw she thereby"—and holds the tale together. But here the theme runs into variations. The "fair, large eyes" of the witch "glitter bright," she rolls them around, she stares with "unsettled eye," she looks askance; there is something of her "shrunken serpent eyes," and of the "shy" eye,

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the "dull" eye of a snake; there is something, too, of Christabel's own imitative look of "dull and treacherous hate." Other magic there is in plenitude, but without the evil eye of the beautiful demon the rest of the tale would seem mere hocus-pocus.

In "Kubla Khan," by contrast, a powerful spell falls upon the poet himself, whence it is again transferred, as by the wizardry of his song he rebuilds the "sunny dome" and "caves of ice," to a group of hypothetical auditors. Subjected by his "flashing eyes," that roll in a fine frenzy of mad enthusiasm, they instinctively begin a magical, circle-weaving ritual of their own. And we are deep in the holy fascination of the general incantation as the poem ends.

The hypnotic power of the Mariner, the Lady Geraldine, and the poet is supernaturally derived and imposed; in comparison, their merely human power makes Svengali and Boris Karloff seem like pikers. The theme, moreover, proves a medium for one of the most vigorous statements of the divine inspiration of poetry ever made. With Coleridge, ophthalmology becomes a necromantic science, and poetry, philosophy, and literary criticism are one and all caught in its toils.

#### VATHEK

A unique and curious volume, William Beckford's *Vathek* is indispensable to the library of any catholic booklover. Damnation in plenty cannot lessen its intriguing fascination. Indeed, it is doubtful if romance—in medieval tale or in the *Arabian Nights*—can anywhere produce a supernatural world more idiotic and memorable.

For *Vathek* is a potpourri of the absurd and the unforgettable. Its crowded episodes of magic, uninformed by any honest wizardry, are fake; and yet, like a string of firecrackers, they go off with rapid and brilliant éclat. The prodigious gastronomic feats of Vathek, doubled by those of the *giaour*, Vathek's terrible optic, which dealt death and confusion all about him, the *giaour* as football, the *giaour* as the insatiable quaffer of the blood of children, the dizzy heights of the tower of Carathis, and the olfactory appeal of the pyre thereon composed of stale mummies and loyal servants, the charming of the fishes, and scores of other tours de force of Beckford's conjuring wit and fancy—one and all, if less spirited than the cumulative detail of

Burns's macabre joviality in "Tam O'Shanter," are hardly less grotesque or sparkling.

This tale *in vacuo* is subject, in moments of asperity, to the most thorough damnation. Without real art, without form, without substance, spun like a spider's thread from an idle pate, a book without utility, whose humor is without point (for Beckford laughs only at his own absurdity), worst of all, a book without truth, either of reality or of imagination: to take this dilettante's bauble seriously is surely a sign of an unhappy literary maturity. For *Vathek* is unique and intriguing, a strange curiosity of literature, so functionless in life and in art as to acquire an interest by its very functionlessness.

And yet this aimless ramble through a crazy limbo of the inane leads at last to the solemn and melancholy magnificence of the fatal palace of Eblis. Here the endless vistas of lofty columns and the interminable somber chambers, wherein are housed the talismanic treasures of the pre-Adamite sultans, rival in imaginative reach the dream world of a Coleridge, this time peopled not by witches or women wailing for demon lovers or angelic spirits of life and death but by persons "in search of repose and consolation," with their right hands irrevocably fixed upon hearts that burn in fierce eternal fire. So *Vathek* closes on a last, indelible impression, Miltonic or Dantean in its gloomy grandeur, the genuine and unforgettable finale of a long series of brilliant and memorable tricks of magic by one of the most competent of literary impostors.

## PROBLEMS OF HIGH-SCHOOL ENGLISH AND COLLEGE FRESHMAN ENGLISH<sup>1</sup>

ALICE V. BROWER<sup>2</sup>

A new constellation is swinging into your ken. Long, long have you read about it in your books; you have observed it from afar; you have even had much to say about it. Two stars only will you see today, but in that constellation are stars whose number is legion. You must realize by now that those heavenly bodies are none other than the preparatory teachers, both public and private.

Seriously, this is a very wise step that is being taken today. For so long we have felt a difficulty; now that together we are doing something about it, it would seem a hopeful sign. How much better to be talking *to* and *with* one another instead of *at* and *about*.

In the brief time allowed, I have three things in mind to explain: first, what I know to be true of high-school English and some of its teachers; second, what I gather from observation and reading to be true of college freshman English and some of its teachers; and, last, what I suggest as remedies for the good of us all.

With every hope of being clear, honest, and enlightening, I shall proceed. Whenever we are considering groups as large as that of the preparatory-school teachers in our nation and the group of college teachers, we must expect to find a wide range of individual differences. Some of these we shall try to minimize, because to do so will be helpful to the larger number. I do know that already in this heterogeneous group there is a large proportion eager to improve many things: courses of study, working habits and attitudes of pupils, as well as the methods and attitudes of some of the teachers.

The factors of age and growth do make for problems of the early years of adolescence that require some techniques and attitudes foreign to the teaching in college years. These must be taken into con-

<sup>1</sup> Read at the Twenty-ninth Annual Meeting of the College Conference on English in the Central Atlantic States, Atlantic City, November 22, 1941.

<sup>2</sup> Head of English department, Davis High School, Mount Vernon, N.Y.

sideration in any fair discussion. These early years are those of awakening interests on which the high-school teacher must capitalize. An intense awareness of himself, his vocation, his social life, his religious experience, his devotion to his group's activities—all these are paramount in the pupil, and they become an integral part of the high-school teacher's thinking about the pupil.

Much practical psychology is being applied to the teaching of these high-school girls and boys. More and more attention is being directed to individual differences and wise guidance. In all this, the English teacher plays no small part. In the large public schools that teacher carries a heavy load, averaging five large classes with two periods of supervision together with a homeroom of thirty-five to forty-five to be closely and carefully counseled as to future plans for college or business career, for health and for social development. Besides, on the English department falls the responsibility for coaching dramatics, sponsoring school clubs, producing the school paper and magazine, planning assembly programs, and commencements.

With all this, one must admit, also, that the daily preparation for teaching these five English classes requires more time and thought to plans and paper-work than do many other subjects. It is not one where a single textbook year after year can be opened in September, moved through by exercises, and closed in June, only to be opened again the following September. Instead, there are many and ever changing texts in literature, grammar, composition. Oral work and written composition and supplementary reading reports must be planned and scheduled. They do not just happen. In fact, long-period assignments are developed and given early in the term so that the pupil may plan his time and learn to live by a time budget. The good teacher of English is a most flexible, versatile teacher, always adapting methods and materials to each new group in terms of its needs and the affairs of the world. For the world is a part of the English classroom. The teacher must be well read to discuss the latest and best books; he must be human and have his favorite radio hours, movie stars, columnists, as well as be informed on the theater, the symphony, and the opera. All these are in many English classrooms. They are the medium through which the pupils are taught to think, read, write, and speak. From these develop thought-provoking editorials and informative term

papers, revealing the kind of independent thinking so well explained by Dr. Bader in his article "Independent Thinking and the Long Paper,"<sup>3</sup> From the reading and discussion of well-chosen books, an appreciation of human behavior is derived and revealed by analytical appraisals with concrete, specific allusions. Naturally, in all this written work the pupil's attention is directed to the rhetorical principles of expression: unity, coherence, and emphasis in theme, paragraph, and sentence, as well as to the correctness of expression, spelling, and punctuation. Through the study of poetry, experience is gained in associative thinking and reading. The pupil soon realizes that one gets out of reading what he takes to it. One cannot bring back the wealth of the Indies unless he takes the wealth of the Indies with him. He learns to read for "more than meets the eye" by considering the threefold appeal of poetry to the senses, the emotions, and the intellect.

There are large numbers of efficient teachers capable of carrying this English load creditably. When discussing large numbers, however, we must admit that not all are trained for this. A problem that arises in many high-school English departments is one of administration and economy. We do not criticize either, but we do recognize their existence as a problem. I am referring to teachers of English from other departments, who, because of a decline in the enrolment in their own special fields, must take over an extra English class or two; there is always English to be taught. Frankly, this practice is to be deplored. Every term there is at least one of these to be "spoon-fed." When he has been given every ingredient from cupboard of experience and has been worked into fairly good condition, he is needed again in his own department. But there is always one from another department to take his place and be similarly initiated into the teaching of English. It is not true that anybody and everybody can teach English. These very teachers, willing as some may be to try, have voiced that and proved that there are many skills needed in this department that are not always burnished by use in teaching other subjects. We shall probably continue indefinitely, in the name of economy, using more of these teachers in the English department.

<sup>3</sup> *English Journal*, October, 1936. Dr. A. L. Bader is a member of the English department of the University of Michigan.

Previously, I mentioned a group interested in perfecting the preparation of high-school pupils in English. I have in mind a committee of the Westchester County Association of Teachers of English, of which I am chairman. For several years this group has been seeking acquaintance with college methods in the hope of effecting smoother articulation. It has been partly through this experience, together with reports from graduates of different schools and my own reading of your professional publications, that I know what I do about *you*. I shall have to say that as a group you, too, show a wide range of individual differences—so wide that you create for the high-school teacher an almost impossible task. We could not begin to satisfy all of you. We could never expect 100 per cent uniformity, but we do wish that you had some small semblance of it, some organization that voiced more of your policies. With all our good intentions and attention to details of techniques of reading and composition, pupils return with varying tales of experience. Even within one college or university, unbelievable differences exist. It would seem that many colleges do not have heads of departments to orgnaize the work and develop uniformity. Why is this? Is it that each professor is such a specialist in his own particular field that he resents guidance or suggestion or criticism from another? Let me tell you of the confusing experiences of a few high-school graduates.

Two girls from the same high school were freshmen in the same university; their English came at the same hour but in adjacent rooms. The girl who had maintained an above-the-average rating in high-school English was being well instructed by a very meticulous teacher with great regard for perfection in all details, with conferences on weekly themes. At the close of this worth-while course, she was rated B. The other girl, who had been a below-the-average English pupil in high school, sat under a dramatics coach, who felt grossly insulted that he had to meet this freshman group in composition. He sat on the desk, swung his legs, told jokes, or be-moaned his fate and never had themes written, for he could not be bothered reading them. The latter, weaker student, in his group was given by him a higher rating in freshman composition for doing nothing than the other girl received for a good term's work. Each student appreciated the unfairness; and the weaker one was con-

cerned, for she knew her own shortcomings and had wanted teaching to improve her command of English and power of expression.

From another campus comes a letter this fall, stating that three spelling errors fail a paper; from another that one comma omitted fails. From still another, where one professor abhors the use of "so," the paper is failed if one sentence can be found with that word. No credit is given in any of these for thinking revealed in the papers; yet we are urged to train pupils to think. Just this past election day a former graduate visited schools. He is taking a business administration course in a large university, where the professor spends endless time berating high schools and the preparation they afford. The members of his class, however, have passed the necessary placement tests to be eligible to the course and resent his harangues. He sets himself up as an absolute authority on punctuation. Although the state department may use open punctuation and although communications on the bulletin boards from the college dean and other officials show the use of this system, he demands the use of the closed system and condemns the practice of the other. We have found that high-grade business houses and excellent authorities in textbooks provide for the use of either system, as long as one is consistent.

In one of our attempts to learn what the colleges were expecting in composition, we wrote to some of them, asking for samples of corrected Freshman papers. This was done with no other motive than to learn. I am embarrassed to tell you what the committee found on some of those papers. They did not help us much; in truth they confused and disturbed us. We feel sorry for any high-school graduates who will meet with similar treatment. Although you have in your ranks many excellent, learned, scholarly, inspiring teachers, still you do have those who write on freshman themes, unfairly graded, such comments as the following:

The preparation in English sounds good; but I know those small New York high schools; they are nothing but Regents' machines; and once the syllabus is covered, to hell with anything else! Her judgment is very bad, e.g., she thinks she was well prepared in writing but read a page of this and you will see why she gets D's all the time. The poor girl will never do better. Incidentally, she wants to major in English. God help us!

Our committee could not agree with his rating. The paper was informative and revealed a mature girl with promise of achievement.

On another paper from the same source one reads:

Good equipment and courses. Suffers from practice teachers. He has personal charm to spare but he is short on either brain power or power to organize and evaluate. His father is a professor in the university. Some of the teachers were also athletic coaches; they were good coaches.

This boy either because of his personal charm or his father's professorship was rated higher than the "poor girl." In our estimation he was not deserving of it. Moreover, the instructor seemed to have lost sight of the fact that this boy was also from one of those "deplorable New York State high schools." So, it would seem that the personal element in rating themes will always be a thorn in the flesh.

It would seem that the teacher of college freshman composition should be one of the most superior in the department. So much may be done through this course to help bewildered youth make a better adjustment to college. Greatness of vision, love of youth itself, magnanimity, should be attributes of this teacher. Instead, too frequently, young inexperienced graduate students are assigned. Many of you feel as I do. I noted in *College English* that Fred A. Dudley,<sup>4</sup> an instructor at Iowa State College, quoted his head of department as saying: "I have never known a man who was too good a teacher for Freshmen, though I've known some who were not good enough."

One way of securing a larger number of the better teachers on the college level would be to require for college teaching at least as much professional training beyond the field of subject matter as is required for secondary-school teaching.

The Board of Regents of the State of New York has recently extended the preparation period for teachers of academic subjects in secondary schools from four years to five years. This action was sponsored by the New York State Teachers Association largely because it was generally believed by teachers, college officials, and others that the present four-year period of preparation was not adequate to give the prospective secondary school teacher a broad, general education, thorough scholarly preparation in subject field they plan to teach and a modicum of professional training.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> "The Success of Freshman English," *College English*, October, 1939.

<sup>5</sup> *Proceedings of the Fifty-sixth Annual Meeting of the New York State Association of Secondary School Principals*, Syracuse, N.Y., December 26, 27, 28, 1940, p. 57.

Is it not just as important for the college teacher to know more about the human beings he is to teach than he frequently does when allowed to teach upon graduation from college with no courses whatever in the psychology, philosophy, and methods of education. Many of these courses have a very humanizing effect.

Again, trying to learn more about you as a group of people to whom we are sending much eager, promising material that we have watched evolve from the confusing years of adolescence, I have for years read closely and consistently everything I could find concerning you. There have been many enlightening articles: some surprised me; others thrilled and warmed me with the promise of a rich philosophy and a genuine mission to teach youth. Between the lines, however, I have frequently gathered that many of you are disgruntled and unhappy at having to teach freshman composition. I note your repeated references to "subject-matter" courses; to the prestige attendant upon teaching literature; to neglected research pursuits because of this "incumbrance." Some of you still cling to remnants of Dr. Campbell's epithets about yourselves as teachers of composition: "pedagogic pretenders," "section hands," "doers of drudgery"—I shall not bother to list more. It has always been my belief that great teachers teach people, not subjects. The love of teaching, the joy of seeing the light of understanding and appreciation glow in another, are among the rich rewards. In its best expression teaching ranks among the noblest arts of man. We have been left a vision of the Greatest Teacher of all who ennobled this calling.

It would seem a deplorable state if emphasis is being placed on scholarly research at the expense of the best teaching of college freshmen. I was informed this fall that in one of the outstanding universities an excellent teacher of freshmen had to be dismissed by the department head, much as he deplored it, because the university disapproved of the fact that this inspiring teacher so gave of himself to the teaching of his students and the friendly guidance of them that he could not find time to publish the number of articles considered necessary for that university's publicity. This would seem to be one of the serious problems of the colleges. We shall always need research scholars, and we shall always need great teachers. Must we sacrifice one for the other? Is there no room for both? This pressure on the professor is typical of the high-tensioned state of much mod-

ern professional life. What price pressure! Too frequently in the larger communities we are finding overstimulated, overcharged, tense, high-pressured patterns of living. Are we certain that this is the best way for the good of all? Would not a bit of sanctuary for each, more time for reflection for all, be more advisable in times like these?

I have pointed to a few problems concerning us all. There must be something concrete to follow this appraisal. May I suggest a few homely, practical ideas?

1. We should aim for uniformly improved methods of teaching in both high school and college. I believe that the teacher-training institutions should be more cognizant of the real situations existing in the schools for which teachers are being prepared. There frequently seems such a distance between the two. Too often one feels an atmosphere of cloistered aloofness from reality in those places where the professors live and think too confinedly within the cubicles of their highly specialized fields. On the other hand, you may think of some of us that "the world is too much with us"—that "we lay waste our powers." More evidence of the distances between us!

2. I think it should be understood that there must be a continuation of reading techniques on the college level. We are doing more and more to help the pupils to read intelligently. But I am only too aware that, for many, more remains to be done after they leave us if they are to be made ready to grapple with increasingly subtle propaganda. I do not envy you, drawing pupils to your campuses from every state in the union. (They are not all like New York or even Pennsylvania or New Jersey.) I do believe that much could be done to help a larger number of teachers throughout the country if more concrete material were published by your organization, similar to that prepared by the University of Michigan, entitled *Preparation for College English*. Anything of this nature, however, should be the work of a joint committee of both high-school and college teachers to avoid the appearance of one group's dictating to the other. I am reminded here, too, of a statement by Dr. Gray at a New York City meeting at which reading skills were being discussed. He said that when we no longer need to teach reading on every level, college included, we had better look to our courses of

study for something wrong. Every subject and every level requires new techniques of reading. The growing practice of administering placement tests, I believe, is excellent and should prove very helpful in discovering those who need more intensive training than others.

3. I believe, too, that every head of a high-school English department should be encouraged to follow the articles in *College English*. I cannot pay high enough tribute to the helpful suggestions that have come to me through the years with each month's copy of the *English Journal* and *College English*. My own belief that each level could, within reason, teach in terms of the one just beyond was strengthened by Dr. Dora Smith's article "Problems of Articulation in the Teaching of English."<sup>6</sup> To do this, of course, the teacher—and the pupils for that matter—should keep in touch with college procedures. Last spring my forty-four college-preparatory seniors, now scattered on campuses throughout the country, read that splendid article, "The Secondary School and the College" by Warner G. Rice.<sup>7</sup> In it he advised strongly against writing fanciful, fantastic, high-flown rhetoric but recommended clear, logical exposition. He drove home to them what I had been stressing in my criticism of "fine writing."

Likewise, they read and discussed "A Philosophy for Required Freshman English" by Theodore Morrison.<sup>8</sup> Therein, he stressed the need for thinking, having something to say, and learning how to say it. His statement strengthened my constant demand for concrete, specific evidence of knowledge of books being discussed. I thrilled when I heard them quote him: "Generalizations are the Freshman's substitute for thinking." And my plea for naturalness was echoed in his statement that the "writing should be an extension of the voice." Too often the high-school pupil tries to drag all his newly acquired vocabulary into his themes instead of using those words for a better comprehension of his reading.

<sup>6</sup> *College English*, November, 1940. Dr. Dora V. Smith is professor of education at the University of Minnesota.

<sup>7</sup> *College English*, November, 1940. Dr. Rice is professor of English at the University of Michigan.

<sup>8</sup> *College English*, May, 1941. Dr. Morrison is director of English A at Harvard University.

4. More contacts like these in large groups ought to be arranged or, better still, "an open-latch policy," inviting more visiting. Why shouldn't you college people look in on some of the large democratic high schools? Why shouldn't we see you in action? It would seem the most practical thing to do. Wherever better understanding is desired today between peoples, a personal visit is made, even if one must fly oceans. There never was so much interchanging of ideas and materials. Why should not the same principle prove wise for us?

May I leave with you this thought? We are sending on to you the youth of America: enthusiastic, eager to try life; serious beyond their years because of the world which is theirs to right. If, with the wisdom of our years of experience, we have nothing to give them as they come to us in these fleeting years for academic education, we have no excuse for being. I recently heard of a first-grade teacher, who at the end of the first week of school wrote letters to the parents of the boys and girls in her grade. This is one of the letters:

MY DEAR MR. ARMSTRONG:

I thank you for lending me your little child today. All the years of love and care and training which you have given him have stood him in good stead in his work and in his play. I send him home to you tonight, I hope a little stronger, a little taller, a little freer, a little nearer his goal. Lend him to me again tomorrow, I pray you. In my care of him I shall show my gratitude."<sup>9</sup>

You, too, O college teachers of freshman English, could write letters to parallel that one. It is true the boy and the girl will be a good bit taller and will stand, we hope, much straighter; their eyes will penetrate unfathomable depths. But they are the same boys and girls, children of parents who for longer years have loved and nurtured them and looked with proud anticipation to the years of their college fulfilment with you. Yours is an enviable opportunity! Yours is the final chance to equip them with that mystic power of utterance, of communication, of thought-moving language that may give tongue to philosophies that will transform the chaos of today into a livable world for their tomorrow!

<sup>9</sup> Used with permission of Dr. John W. Dodd, president, New York State Teachers Association; superintendent of schools, Freeport, Long Island.

## THE PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOL AND THE COLLEGE<sup>1</sup>

ROBERT J. CADIGAN<sup>2</sup>

Whenever a group of conscientious educators are gathered together for a conference on a topic such as we are attempting to conjure with today, I think of a remark by Mr. Jack Benny. Said Mr. Benny: "A conference is a wonderful thing, for it brings together people who individually can do nothing, but collectively they can decide that nothing can be done." I also think of the parable of the good shepherd, who went in search of his wandering sheep, leaving the ninety-nine others presumably huddled in safety. In this discussion of our academic sins of omission and commission, all of us present are the ninety-nine good sheep, wagging our heads about the errant ways of our absent colleagues.

In representing the independent or private secondary schools, I cannot, for instance, defend a great many of the practices current in our English programs, nor, I am sure, will the college instructors present defend some practices generally abhorred by high-school teachers. There is at present such a lack of uniformity among the high-school and college English teachers that it is almost impossible to generalize from specific experiences or observations that any individual may have had. It may be helpful to describe some of the numerous types of teachers and students, so that we can see the nature of some of the problems that develop in the transition from high school to college.

Foremost among the college English instructors, it seems to us, is the man of reasonable requests. He is a man who has been given the task of preparing students to use the English language with sufficient ability to do satisfactory work in college courses. Unless he can accomplish that purpose, he feels frustrated, so naturally he

<sup>1</sup> Read at the Twenty-ninth Annual Meeting of the College Conference on English in the Central Atlantic States, Atlantic City, November 22, 1941.

<sup>2</sup> Teacher of English, Friends Central School, Overbrook, Pa.

focuses attention on his major responsibility. He tells the high-school teachers: "Send us students who can understand a page of printed matter, and who can write and speak so that others can understand him." All he wants are students who can understand and express ideas. That is all. Of course that is the request made by teachers in the senior high school to their colleagues in the junior high school, and so on down to the kindergarten. Teachers all along the line recognize this responsibility as a paramount obligation, and yet people are still entering college who cannot write a respectable sentence. Why is that?

Two basic explanations present themselves: the nature of the pupils who are now finishing high school and entering college and the lack of agreement regarding the means by which this seemingly simple objective may be realized. Let us then consider a few typical students. Albert has linguistic limitations. He has barely passed his high-school subjects. He has been in a high school, public or private, in which the teachers have labored conscientiously with him. His percentile scores on psychological or reading tests have been as low as 1 and never higher than 20. He has tried hard. Rather than keep this boy in the ninth grade, the teachers promote him along with his age-mates, so that he will not suffer from social maladjustment. This practice is defended on the grounds that the work in the next years will be adapted to his individual aptitude, that he will gain more from new curriculum experiences than he would from a repetition of the old. Skilful have been some of the adaptations of teachers and textbook publishers to meet his needs. As a senior in high school, he will be reading revised texts presenting twelfth-grade ideas in seventh-grade vocabularies. Whether or not Albert should go to college—any college—is a debatable question. High-school guidance counselors have, more often than not, advised against it. There is ample evidence to believe that he will not be happy at the institution on which his parents have set their hearts. The school does not support his application, they warn college admissions officers in advance; and yet, when September arrives, Albert is enrolled in a reputable institution, frequently the one of his choice. Whether or not his academic career terminates either in January or in June of his first year depends not so much upon the boy as upon the nature

of the preconceived standards of the institution. He writes in letters to his former teachers that they should have taught him how to spell, that they should have made him punctuate correctly, and then he appears at a school home-coming day and announces that he is now an involuntary alumnus. That is the inevitable denouement of Albert's collegiate biography. Inevitable, unless Albert selected a college operating under either a humanitarian notion of democracy or one which is financially on its last pins and needs this boy's tuition money. This latter institution may, incidentally, be developing an enlightened program for all the Alberts who come to them. It may be. If so, it would help the high-school teachers if this could be clearly stated in catalogues. Would it not be wonderful if admissions officers of these institutions were to go up and down the land, saying, "Come unto us, all ye who are oppressed with spelling and misplaced modifiers"? If the colleges are going to accept the Alberts of these times, they had better do that very thing. Or, is it possible that some colleges, relatively secure financially, can keep out of the red by accepting a large number of tuitions for the freshman year only and, having received four hundred dollars from the students, can then afford to exercise their consciences and refuse to take any more money under false pretenses. I am saying that, with all the data that is now available from results of objective testing programs and the personality and behavior descriptions of high-school seniors, admissions officers who accept a large number of candidates subsequently to be flunked by freshman English teachers either do not know how to interpret evidence or they are simply guaranteeing their own daily bread.

In contrast to Albert is Bill, the gifted one—Bill, the bright. Maybe he's lazy, maybe he's slow—maybe he's crazy, they don't know. College deans just can't help loving that man, Bill. For one reason or another, Bill has not been a good school citizen; he has wasted his time, neglected his opportunities, and apparently is "fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils." He never does his homework, but he scores high on the scholastic aptitude test, and he is therefore an honorable man. Bill of the seventy-fifth percentile is accepted by a college which turns down hard-working, charming, conscientious Charlotte of the fortieth percentile. The assumption is that Bill's

high-school work has failed to challenge him, that college-course work will awaken his slumbering interests, and that he will find himself. It seems to be a good risk to take. Sometimes it proves so. Sometimes it does not; and in those cases high-school teachers receive a notification of the fact that Bill has been inadequately trained. It doesn't make the high-school teachers feel any better to be able to say, "We told you so. We told you it was a risk."

Then there is Dora. She is reasonably bright, has been a faithful worker, has some sense of what is important in life, has read widely for purposes both of pleasure and of profit. Whatever she does is characterized by thoroughness and a fair amount of insight. She is likely to express herself in uninspired but intelligible prose. Dora will do satisfactory work in college just as she did in high school. She would probably do just about as well in college regardless of what system of education she had experienced during her high-school years. She would profit from a progressive or a traditional course. She will adapt herself to a college instructor whether he be a rigid grammarian or an aspiring poet.

It may seem heresy in these days when one is forced to champion one type of educational theory as against all others to admit that that is so, but there are records to support the claim. There are many Doras who have transferred from a traditional public school to a progressive independent school and who have then continued in a traditional college. In all three places Dora has consistently been a good student. She has behaved about as was expected, for Dora can learn because and in spite of what we may teach.

Having considered a few typical students, let us now examine several high-school English teachers to raise the question of whether a lack of agreement concerning methods may make at least some difference. First, there is the literary traditionalist, who concentrates on transmitting morsels of our cultural heritage. She is vaguely aware that the College Board Entrance examinations have changed their emphasis from tests of knowledge of certain favored classics to tests of language power. Whereas some of her colleagues have cast aside what they may have considered the chains of *Ivanhoe*, *Burke's speech*, and speculations concerning the identity of the third murderer in *Macbeth*, she merely rattles the chains to show that

she is free. Students in her classes begin with a bite of Beowulf and finish with a nibble of A. A. Milne. They develop their vocabularies with such words as "romanticism," "classicism," and "naturalism." They memorize Gray's "Elegy," and they know what the quality of mercy is not. They are sedulous note-takers of their teacher's college notes on the moot point of Hardy's pessimism. They compare Carlyle with Ruskin, although they haven't had time to read more than a few paragraphs of either. They know that Keats traveled much in "the realms of gold," and they know that "All that glitters is not" of that realm. Pupils in this class receive high marks if they can juggle some terminology and can remember who of what school wrote what in what period.

Other teachers of English have used their new freedom in a variety of ways. One of the new kinds of English teachers is the fusionist. He is concerned with the relationship of the English language and literature with other courses in the curriculum, and thus his primary purpose is to unite with teachers of the social studies, the sciences, and the arts in planning an integrated or correlated program. Subject-matter boundary lines disappear in fact as well as in theory. Core courses organized around such areas as health, social problems, or American culture replace the work that used to be separate and isolated. Language ability is developed to meet the needs of the academic situations as they arise. This type of work is characterized by such phrases as "democratic participation in common enterprises," and "preparation for life as well as for college." The method of procedure is quite as important as the actual work accomplished, and the fusionist believes in the sharing of responsibility to develop social behavior and concern for the welfare of the group. It has been said that this type of teacher would probably have been more thrilled in contemplating the epochal transatlantic flight of the "Spirit of St. Louis," if it had been accomplished not by a "Lone Eagle" but by a committee. The courses that have been developed under this relatively new plan have for the most part been stimulating, practical, inspired, and purposeful. There is at all times a consciousness of objectives, and students become self-directing workers and amateur educational philosophers. They learn the techniques of problem-solving and apply them as enthusiastically to

questions of housing or freedom of speech as they do to issues of student government or personal matters of family friction. The history of literature and so-called literary criticism has been largely abandoned, save for occasional nostalgic returns, to studies of Shakespeare or of modern poetry, which may not correlate with anything in particular. Such studies are still included in deference to those who like their poetry straight, and thus a sop is thrown to Cerberus. A pupil who has been in such courses will enter college, possibly knowing nothing of Hardy, Shelley, or Keats. He will, among other things, be more skilled than the average student in library techniques and will have read more widely. His writing and expression of ideas may or may not be more literate, depending upon the degree of attention given to that phase of his work. College teachers will find him more lively, individualistic, and critical. Sometimes he suffers from the malady of knowing a little bit about everything in general. Just as the student from the traditional course will be under the illusion that he doesn't need to study Emerson, since he had him in high school, so the integrated pupil will protest against the study of the role of the consumer, since he studied that in the tenth grade. Studies of the Progressive Education Association's Commission on the Relations of Secondary School and College, that will be published in the spring of 1942 by Harper and Brothers, will compare the college adjustments of graduates of schools who have had such programs with control students who have come from more traditional schools. It was found that the products of the fusion or core programs did as well as those who had been trained in less experimental schools. According to H. H. Giles,<sup>3</sup> college teachers have testified that students from the most experimental schools "take more interest in ideas, talk more freely and participate more in extra-curricular activities of a socially important nature."

Finally, before mentioning other types of high-school English teachers, it should be stated that, whereas some are clearly in one camp or another, there are many who are trying their level best to be centipedes and keep one foot in numerous camps. Such a one might be the salvationist, the literature teacher who is concerned with the

<sup>3</sup> "English in the Eight Year Study," *English Journal*, February, 1941.

innermost drives of the student's selfhood. Student needs are ministered unto through reading and guided activity much as they would be by psychologists. This teacher is frequently doing the most significant teaching in the entire school program; and, if she sometimes neglects the proper use of the comma—which is not inevitable under her type of course—if her students are not crackerjack spellers, God will forgive her, even if college instructors do not.

Another type of teacher is the disciple of the creative. She places her emphasis on narrative writing, poetry, and other forms of artistic endeavor. Then there is the "minimum essentialist," who declares grimly that his charges are going to learn how to write a paragraph whether they like it or not, that he will not do another thing until they can spell, punctuate, and compose sentences. Frequently his threat becomes literally true, sometimes at the cost of stifling pupil initiative and interest. Whether such a rigid definition of the work of English is more effective in realizing its own limited objective than one or a combination of the other approaches previously described remains to be proved. A newcomer in the curriculum seems to be the semanticist. At present he is in his infancy; in the future he might possibly—just possibly—become the master.

All the foregoing types of teachers have one thing in common, regardless of their theories and practices in the classroom. They are all tired. They all advise the staffs of the senior-class yearbooks, coach one or more full-length plays, have a hand in the planning of faculty meetings and curriculum revisions, direct assembly programs, and some of them—poor work horses that they are—some of them teach fencing or coach the line in football and the backfield in lacrosse. Also in common they have the limited Alberts, the bright but unreliable Bills, and the faithful Doras and numerous others. They have the problems of these students in common, and regardless of their pedagogical differences they share a great many hopes for these students as they send them on to college. For purposes of emphasis, only one of these hopes need be mentioned now—the hope that freshmen will find some provision for individual differences, that they will not all be stretched on the Procrustean bed of arbitrary standards.

## INCREASING THE PROFIT OF THE COURSE IN BUSINESS WRITING

ZAIDEE E. GREEN<sup>1</sup>

"No man but a blockhead ever wrote except for money," Samuel Johnson protested, and, though we in the teaching profession often unlock our word-hoard gratuitously, we should perhaps keep his pronouncement in mind in training those who will enter the field of business.

The college course in business writing should, I think, be a course in which the student is motivated to collect and study business materials, to observe business policies and practices, to reflect upon improvements in the business communications which he studies, and to attempt to write creatively, with the hope of selling his work to business organizations and to business journals.

With the radio "commercial" supplanting the sales letter in many directions, with the public relations pamphlet performing the functions of various kinds of good-will letter, with the standard-practice manual and the house organ replacing varieties of interoffice memorandum, and with the business article transmitting certain information which was formerly conveyed by letter or report, there is, it would seem, an obligation to broaden the horizon of the college course in business writing—to tie the course more closely to business as it is now being conducted. No longer is it sufficient to drill the student on the mechanical makeup of sundry kinds of business letter, interoffice memorandum, and report and to supplement his knowledge of correct and tactful writing in the field of business correspondence. It is, indeed, imperative that attention be given to these

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matters, but it is usually possible to stress them adequately in connection with the broader aspects of the subject, preferably through class discussion of actual business materials.

As a rule, the student who enrols in a college course in business writing has had at least one semester's work in freshman composition and has had in it some training in the writing of business letters. Many of the students who enrol in the course have had secretarial courses in high school or in college and know, therefore, the fundamentals of letter-writing. Certain of the students have completed courses in advertising and marketing which have given them instruction in the basic technique of selling. A number of students in any college course in business writing can, therefore, be trained for remunerative positions as business correspondents, and those who may not care for such employment can be prepared for other opportunities in the expanding field of business writing.

Certainly, almost every student in the class will need additional training in punctuation, in sentence structure, in the organization of material, and perhaps in spelling and grammar; but business writing cannot be taught with the precision that is necessary in the teaching of freshman composition. Every student should unquestionably be required to defend the breach of any rule of punctuation, composition, or rhetoric which he may wish to violate for the sake of emphasis in certain kinds of business writing, but he should be shown the advantage of breaking certain rules—for example, the power that the fragmentary sentence, the chief taboo of freshman composition, can have in some kinds of sales letter. Above all, he should be encouraged to endeavor to write salable material.

The best approach to the subject of business writing is, perhaps, through a consideration of the ways of words in business, the manifold ways in which words can be combined to create a desired effect. Even an exercise as simple as the following will help to make a student aware of the principles involved in the creation of an effective trade slogan and enable him to compose slogans for the products which he advertises in the sales letters that he writes for the course or slogans which he may seek to sell to business organizations:

EXERCISE ON WAYS OF WORDS IN ADVERTISING<sup>a</sup>

The power of a trade slogan lies in (1) the desire which it arouses; (2) the confidence which it inspires; (3) the ease with which it is remembered.

Some of the aids to memory are (a) rime; (b) simple repetition; (c) alliteration; (d) climax and anticlimax; (e) puns; (f) paraphrases of well-known proverbs or of expressions in common use; (g) the verbatim use of proverbs or common expressions with an added shade of meaning; (h) pictorial coinages by analogy to words in common use.

Indicate the source of the power of each of the following slogans by placing the number 1, 2, or 3 beside it; and indicate the device employed to aid the memory by placing *a*, *b*, *c*, *d*, *e*, *f*, *g*, or *h* beside it.

1. <i>Never say Dye, Say Rit</i>	Rit
2. <i>It's Gingervating</i>	Canada Dry Ginger Ale
3. <i>No Stoop, No Squat, No Squint</i>	Philco Radio
4. <i>When It Rains, It Pours</i>	Morton's Salt
5. <i>Helps Teeth Shine like the Stars</i>	Calox
6. <i>If It's Safe in Water, It's Safe in Lux</i>	Lux
7. <i>It Takes Your Breath Away</i>	Adam's Clove Gum
8. <i>You'll Dance for Joy</i>	Blue Jay Corn Plasters
9. <i>The Strength of Gibraltar</i>	Prudential Insurance Company
10. <i>The Fair for Food</i>	Fair Department Store
11. <i>Better Light—Better Sight</i>	National Better Light—Better Sight Bureau
12. <i>The Man Who Cares Says: "Carstairs"</i>	Carstairs Company
13. <i>How To Make a Penny Stretch a Mile</i>	Santa Fe Trailways Bus
14. <i>Let Up, Light Up a Camel</i>	Camel Cigarettes
15. <i>Buy More by Spending Less</i>	Greyhound Bus Lines
16. <i>From Black to Bright—Quick as Light</i>	Brillo Company
17. <i>Sixty Million Writers Must Be Right</i>	Waterman's Pens
18. <i>Time To Re-tire</i>	Fisk Tires
19. <i>Motorists Wise Simoniz</i>	Simoniz Company
20. <i>Eventually, Why Not Now?</i>	Gold Medal Flour
21. <i>Nothing Else Will Do</i>	Chesterfield Cigarettes

Create 4 original slogans and classify them

- 22.
- 23.
- 24.
- 25.

<sup>a</sup> This exercise and excerpts from other exercises have been reprinted here through the courtesy of the publishers from the author's textbook, *Writing in Business* (Henry Holt & Co., 1941).

An exercise like the following will frequently appeal to students who insist on listening to the radio as they prepare assignments, and it can prove profitable to some of them:

#### SELLING BY THE STOP WATCH

In former days a salesman frequently harangued a prospective customer or pleaded with him and even followed him into the street; and volubility often broke down resistance. But volubility is much too costly for the firm which sells by air. The radio salesman has only a few seconds in which to talk about his product and every word which he uses must pay for itself.

Make a study of the advertising which you hear tonight on three radio programs, with the following things in mind:

- a) *The force of the words employed.* Did they make you whiff the aroma of the coffee, sense the savor of the broth, see the shimmer of the velvet, crave the protection of the tires? List the words which accomplished these results.
- b) *The economy of language.* Record the number of seconds allotted to advertising on each program and the number of words employed in getting the message across. How was one robust word made to do the work of many? Was there any wasted language? If so, rephrase the advertising, eliminating weak and useless words.
- c) *The articulation of advertising material and entertainment.* Was the advertising introduced adroitly, tied up cleverly with the entertainment? If so, list the transition phrases which carried you easily from jokes or music to the sales talk. If there were awkward pauses or clumsy transitions, make suggestions for improvement. It is quite possible that you can sell such suggestions.

Other exercises which help to make the student alert to the value of the economical and discerning use of language are those which are based on a consideration of telegrams, want ads, newspaper headlines, billboard and magazine advertisements, and sales talks which are accompanied by demonstrations in department and drug stores. The sales talk is especially useful, since the student can determine quickly which of the words employed by the demonstrator are most successful in catching the attention of the passer-by.

Though the student can be taught by the instructor and by textbooks what to say in the various paragraphs of business letters and even how to say it, he will progress faster by devoting most of his attention to the actual materials of business. He should bring to the classroom letters which he has collected and analyze them for the benefit of the class, commenting on the stationery, the letterhead, the organization of material, and especially upon the language of the

letter and its likelihood of success. If the letter was intended to be tactful but is not, or persuasive but is not, the student should read the revision of the letter which he has prepared, calling attention to the corrections which he has made so that the class may discuss them. He should also call attention to errors in punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure which he has noted, to jargon which he has deleted, to verbiage which he has eliminated. After a time he will find such jargon as "I see by your letter," "at the present writing," "your favor of recent date," "at your early convenience," so irritating that he will not employ it in the letters which he writes. He should retain the praiseworthy letters which he has collected and scrutinize them frequently.

I think that the student should from time to time submit to a business house his suggestions for the revision of a circular letter if the class as a whole thinks that he has succeeded in making a weak letter strong, though his letter of transmittal should, of course, be exceedingly tactful and should perhaps indicate that the revision was prepared as an assignment for a course in business writing. With much less hazard of giving offense he can venture to sell to a business house an original sales letter which he has prepared for one of its products or a sales follow-up series. If he has artistic as well as literary talent, he can sketch a few illustrations which can be reproduced in the letter or letters. Frequently a good student not only will be paid for his revisions of business materials or for his original contributions but will be asked by a business organization to submit additional work and, if this proves satisfactory, will be offered a position as a business correspondent.

In attempting to train the student to appraise the business materials which he is considering, it is requisite to acquaint him with some of the problems of production. At first he is disposed to think that the best letters are those which have been individually typed and which appear on high-grade stationery with engraved letter-heads, that the best folders are those with the most expensive illustrations, provided that the diction is appropriate and reasonably effective. He does not realize that the test of the value of any business communication lies in the answer to the question, "Will it pay?" and that, though quality is desirable, such matters as volume, time,

and cost must also be considered. He can be trained, however, to estimate the cost of various kinds of communication and to determine in what situations form material may be satisfactorily substituted for dictated correspondence. A printed card, for example, which transmits needed information quickly is frequently a more valuable agent in the creation of good will than a belated individually dictated letter.

There should, I think, be increasing emphasis in a course in business writing on letters of application for employment, and among these should be a number of "prospecting letters" or letters inquiring whether there is a vacancy of the sort that the student believes he could fill. Class discussion of these letters will enable the student to know whether he is writing applications which are likely to merit consideration. The student can be shown wherein he has failed to analyze the position for which he is applying, wherein he has neglected to ponder the possible reactions of the prospective employer; he can be shown the respects in which his letter is too arrogant or too obsequious. Blunders such as the following, which were taken from actual letters of application, will frequently amuse a student mildly and make him aware of the urgency of considering every word which he puts in a letter of application:

I have been sufficiently versatile to change positions often.

I am seeking a position as a salesman. I was a member of the Philological Society in college.

Please let me intrude upon your time.

I should like a position as a secretary. I studied stenography and typing in college and was elected May Queen in my senior year.

I haven't had much education, but I understand that you haven't either.

My father has just thrown me out of his hardware business. I am turning to you for employment.

I didn't do well in college, but I really didn't try.

Give me a six months' trial. If we like each other, I will stay.

It is important that the student in a course in business writing should learn to compose gracious requests for letters of recommendation, that he should learn to evaluate such letters, and that he should learn to write testimonials to the ability of others which will win the

confidence of readers. He should realize that extravagant praise can be just as disparaging to a candidate for a position as frugal praise and that negative statement, faulty emphasis, or tactless phraseology of any sort can render a recommendation valueless and frequently injure the person for whom it was written as well as the author of the letter. Students can readily detect the faults in the following sentences, which were taken from actual letters of recommendation:

Mr. Richards did not attempt to usurp my position.

I can assure you that Miss Dowden will usually be on time in the morning.

Mr. Randall manages to live within his income.

I enjoyed having Miss Montgomery keep my books. Her penmanship is beautiful.

Mr. Andrews suited me, but I am not a taskmaster.

Mr. Blaine is the most honest person in the world.

No one could truthfully say that Miss Turner is immodest in dress or manner.

Mr. Hilton is brilliant, personable, painstaking, and indefatigable.

I have never caught Mr. Thompson doing anything dishonest.

Mr. Wilbur earned his salary.

Although Miss Blanchard is in poor health, she has not missed a day in five years.

All letters of request for materials for term papers, letters of request for interviews, and questionnaires which students plan to send or take to business houses should, for the sake of the training involved, be approved by the class, in order to make certain that the requests are in the proper form, that they will reflect credit upon the individual student and upon the class, and that no particular business organization will be harassed by petitions for materials or besieged by student interviewers. In other words, the students in a business-writing class should think of themselves as members of a business firm which has something to offer and much to gain from the outside world of business, and they should work co-operatively and seek diligently to maintain and increase the good will which business houses have manifested for the class and for the institution

in which it is conducted. Almost any letter of request for special information concerning the operations of a business should conform to the following pattern:

1. It should be courteously worded.
2. It should win the reader's confidence and his interest.
3. It should contain a *reasonable* request.
4. It should contain a *specific* request.
5. It should indicate the reason for the request.
6. It should state the use that will be made of the information requested.

It is safe to assume that the student who was guilty of the following egregiously tactless request has not received an answer:

I should like to have you send me a copy of your income tax return for the year ending December 31, 1940. I must make a report on the subject of depreciation of textile machinery for one of my courses at X University, and I should like to know how much money your company was able to save last March by claiming that its machinery had depreciated.

And only a whimsical, though irritated, person would have spared the time to respond as he did to a helpless little girl who had written him these sentences:

Anything that you can tell me about collection letters will assist me. I must write a fifty-page report on this subject, and I don't know where to begin. The title of my report is *Collection Letters That Bring Returns*. Perhaps the title will help you.

Dear Miss Anderson: I haven't been making many collections lately. So I, unfortunately, cannot afford to stop my work and write that report for you.

The student in a course in business writing should be required to write letters expressing appreciation of materials which business organizations have sent in response to his requests, and he should be urged to write letters of thanks for all interviews which have been granted him, especially for interviews which have been granted in connection with applications for employment. Such letters not only reveal the student's acquaintance with the amenities of business but frequently yield rewards.

The student should be induced, I think, to enter newspaper and radio contests which are intended to increase the sales of various commodities and should be stimulated to create original contests and to write commercial skits for the radio with the hope of selling them.

Instead of accepting the instructor's suggestion of subjects for reports and sedulously following his directions concerning the form thereof, the student should endeavor to find subjects of his own and to experiment with various kinds of business report. A consideration of the annual reports of the Standard Oil Company and of the Radio Corporation of America will show, for example, that the language of the business report need not be soporific, that statistics need not be presented mechanically. Frequently a business organization is glad to accept the offer of an intelligent student to investigate and report on some aspect of its operations, is happy to grant him assistance, and when the report proves helpful is eager to offer him employment.

Often a report on a subject of general interest to businessmen can be used as the basis of an article and submitted to any one of a variety of business periodicals. If it is informative or clever or if it contains novel ideas that will warrant attention, it will probably be accepted for publication. Needless to say, the student who has had several articles published will find it much easier to obtain the kind of employment which he seeks or to procure a scholarship for advanced study.

A student who is interested in obtaining a position with a particular firm can frequently introduce himself by submitting an article which might appropriately be published in its house organ or in one of its public relations pamphlets. Such article need not be in the nature of a testimonial. All that is necessary is that it tie up in one way or another with the business of the firm to which it is offered. A student with a flair for advertising can sometimes win attention by submitting to a business house a folder or booklet which he has prepared for one or more of its products.

The opportunities for increasing the profit of a course in business writing are almost limitless. The student with imagination, ambition, and initiative, with an increasing knowledge of the various forms of business communication, and with a talent for the discriminating use of language can find numerous opportunities to sell to business organizations the work which he prepares as part of the course requirements if he is allowed a certain independence in preparing his work.

## USAGE FOR COLLEGE FRESHMEN

I. COLODNY<sup>1</sup>

A study of the subfreshman English courses given in twenty of the leading colleges on the Pacific Coast corroborated my suspicions of many years' standing that colleges do not devote enough time to the teaching of the English language. It is true that for some time now colleges have required the passing of an entrance examination in English. Requiring the examination, however, was a step which merely evidenced that colleges were not satisfied with the teaching of English in the high school. Whether the required entrance examination has improved that instruction in the high schools I cannot say. My experience with classes in "Subject A" and in freshman English at the Los Angeles City College reveals woeful inadequacy in spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and vocabulary. Very few students in these classes know how to use a dictionary.

My survey on the Pacific Coast showed that we do very little in English for the student who fails the entrance examination and not enough for the student who passes it. Those who fail are subjected to a course variously called "Subject A," "English A," or "Dumbbell English," taught by a senior or a young instructor. The length of the course varies from twice a week for a quarter to three times a week for a semester. For a course which yields no college credit, the student must pay out of his substance from ten to fifteen dollars. It does not improve his attitude toward the course when, as likely as not, some who were his classmates in high school with lower grades than his are notified that they have passed the entrance examination.

Unless you face a class in subfreshman English, you cannot understand the resentment in the hearts of these young people. They clench their teeth and try to do the work required but vow to do no more than is absolutely necessary for a passing grade. They do not come to class to learn English. All they want, Mister, is to pay up

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and get out. To them the whole thing is a "gyp." From now on, Herr Professor, you take them and teach them in one quarter, twice a week, the difference between a sentence and a phrase, the nature of a verb, the nature of a compound sentence, and the right spelling and pronunciation of three-syllable words. Under the circumstances, is it possible to teach spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and vocabulary in one quarter or one term?

Let us examine the simple problem of teaching spelling to the students in Subject A. Can it be accomplished in one quarter even if nothing else is done? On our campus I have conducted a spelling clinic for students of Subject A and others, for five years. We meet twice a week, an hour each time; and it is my considered opinion that unless we meet five times a week for two semesters, half of my students will continue to be poor in spelling. When out of twenty students fifteen misspell "soliloquy," seventeen misspell "sergeant," and ten misspell "privilege," it is clear that a great deal needs to be done. Mind you, this is the result after some time has been given to a study of the words I have used for examples. Without an opportunity to study the words, seven out of twenty-three students misspelled "thorough"; eight, "accompanying"; eleven, "aggravate"; thirteen, "absorption"; seventeen, "apartment"; nineteen, "attendance"; and eighteen, "although."

Now for punctuation. It is seldom that we find a college freshman who understands the use of the semicolon and only a bit less seldom that we find one who has any appreciation of the value of commas. The dash is the popular signpost; it does duty for period, semicolon, and comma. We will pass over the use of quotation marks. Will a teacher of English tell me that it is possible, in the little time available in Subject A, to teach punctuation to students who have such a very poor conception of punctuation marks?

How much time will it take to teach sentence structure to students who don't know the difference between a compound sentence and a complex sentence? The college freshman knows nothing about paragraphing. Try to teach that in a one-semester, three-hour course, even if you have nothing else to teach!

Vocabulary? Everywhere we hear complaints to the effect that the college freshman can't express himself. Those of us who teach freshman composition know all about that. If a whole semester,

three times a week, were devoted to vocabulary, where would your students be at the end? I give a course at Los Angeles City College in vocabulary-building, one hour, three times a week. At the end of the first semester we have just scratched the surface of the subject. Not until students have completed a second semester in vocabulary-building do they show any mastery of the choice of words.

The students who need more courses and more hours in the rudiments of English are the English majors preparing to teach English in the schools. As a class, the prospective teachers of English are the happy hunting ground for the professors of literature. The English majors are the ones who later do a poor job of teaching English in high schools because most of them have had very little instruction in grammar and writing.

Reading Shakespeare and listening to lectures on the Romantic Movement are of very little value to a teacher who has to correct compositions. I think that young English teachers do a very good job of rebroadcasting the lectures they have heard in college; and maybe they do. Maybe the fact that their education is so limited explains why their students know so little about spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and paragraphing, for they are not qualified teachers of the English language, and the halt cannot lead the blind.

As for the students who will not teach English and who go into the literature courses, they probably would get more out of their reading if they did not suffer from "vocabulary insolvency." Heaven knows what they think they read! A few weeks ago the students of my classes who had passed Subject A with flying colors were assigned a short paragraph from an article that appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*. They did not know eleven of the one hundred and forty words in one paragraph. Here are the words: "surge," "lilt," "shoals," "prey," "atmosphere," "vicissitudes," "filtering," "diminutive," "meteors," "recesses," "abyss."

I sent them to the dictionary, and, whether it is the fault of the dictionary or whether it is their own inexperience with a dictionary, the definitions they extracted appalled me.

This whole discussion simmers down to a matter of examining what students learn and how much they can learn in a given time. We teach too many things in too short a time. No one needs to be reminded that learning is a slow process and that it takes time to

learn a few things or that we are not doing the student any good at all when we try in one semester to teach him spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, paragraphing, and vocabulary.

If college students cannot learn in one semester, two hours a week, to spell words we used to teach sixth-graders, how much spelling will they learn if during that same time they must try to learn punctuation, sentence structure, and vocabulary? Knowing the antagonism to grammar which exists in the minds of the present-day professors of English, I do not mention that subject. Even if I wished to assume that professors of English are smart enough to teach all the subjects enumerated in one quarter, or one semester, I cannot forget that students, although their capacities may be large, have bottlenecks.

When I point out the insufficiency of time given in colleges to the teaching of the English language, I am told that the department of English offers more courses than any other department. The catalogue bulges with courses in English. That is true, but most of the courses deal with literature. Why anybody would assume that courses in literature are courses in language, I have for years failed to understand. Generally speaking, these courses are devoted to the history of literary periods, writers, and movements. There is some reading done, but so is reading done, and even more of it, in history courses. To my mind it is a positive deception to drag students into literature courses and give them the impression that they are studying English. I am not so old that I cannot remember how little emphasis was put on language in the literature courses I took, because the professors who taught literature were rarely language minded.

Among seven hundred college catalogues from large and small colleges which I examined a few years ago, only one hundred gave courses that could be classified as vocabulary-building. I don't think the situation has changed in the last five years. For every language course offered by the departments of English, there are two or more in literature.

What we call Subject A, or remedial English, should be the most important course in the department of English. It should not be turned over, as it universally is, to inexperienced instructors, and it should be given five times a week throughout the freshman year.

Right now at our college we are contemplating giving a two-hour, one-semester course in the use of the dictionary. Studying the use of the dictionary now consumes a session or two. We have reached the conclusion that this study needs more attention because it is impossible to give it sufficient time in Subject A or in freshman English classes. For the new class in dictionary study, we hope to recruit students from Subject A and other freshman classes. While many colleges are polishing off the freshman in three to five semester hours, we shall be giving him an opportunity to take two hours in Subject A, from three to six hours in vocabulary, two hours of spelling, two hours in the use of the dictionary, and three semester hours in the regular freshman English, making a total of from twelve to fifteen semester hours.

Even at this rate we are bound to skimp and crowd too much work into too short a time. I feel that we do not give enough time to spelling and that the work done in Subject A could be done much better if we met five times a week throughout a semester. I also feel that the freshman who is subjected to this blitzkrieg of English in his freshman year will be much more receptive, not only in literature classes, but also in all other classes that require reading and speaking of the English language.

What we call freshman composition should be moved to the second year. If I had my way, it would be another year-length course, five times a week. The literature courses and creative-writing courses could be postponed to the third and fourth years. I know that objections will be voiced loudly to this plan. If first-year students take remedial English and second-year students take composition, there will not be enough students to fill up the classes in first- and second-year literature courses. If the objective of filling up classes is uppermost, there is no good in the change; but perhaps it is time we gave the student and his real needs some consideration.

It seems to me that the logical procedure would be to teach college students the language and its mechanics first and literature afterward. Then it will not be necessary for college professors to consume all their time explaining the meaning of the masterpieces of English literature to students who cannot read.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See Edwin R. Embree, "Can College Graduates Read?" *Saturday Review of Literature*, July 16, 1938.

## ROUND TABLE

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### A CONTEMPORARY AESTHETIC INJUSTICE

The "literature and life" critics have been, poor things, thoroughly terrified of late, what with the war and the attack made recently upon their protégés, the Messrs. Steinbeck, Hemingway, Wright, *et al.*<sup>1</sup> Patrons of such horror-themes as sex, poverty, and "ugly realities" of all kinds, they have been properly rapped across the knuckles and are presumably beating a retreat toward the chaster regions of the classics, peopled by such clean-living young Americans as Oedipus, Clytemnestra, Jocasta, Aegisthus, and Medea.

What guaranteed Mr. Stimmel's rout of these critics was not so much the guerilla warfare against such detached units as Pilar and Bigger Thomas as the point-blank artillery fire of that too well tested weapon of annihilation: "It is Life. But is it Art?" With that piece Ibsen was slain, and Tolstoy was blotted out. Dostoevsky fell before it, Flaubert flew into bloody fragments, and Euripides—even in Hades, if you remember—became a pathetic shadow. Even great Shakespeare—but let Dr. Johnson answer that charge:

*Dennis* is offended, that *Menenius*, a senator of Rome, should play the buffoon; and *Voltaire* perhaps thinks decency violated when the *Danish Usurper* is represented as a drunkard. But *Shakespeare . . .* was inclined to shew an usurper and a murderer not only odious but despicable, he therefore added drunkenness to his other qualities. . . . These are the petty cavils of petty minds.<sup>2</sup>

We have no wish, however, to quote the licentious Samuel Johnson further. He is fallen into the same disrepute as Aristotle ("Tragedy is the imitation of men in action . . ."), Longinus (who quoted with such glee the prurient Sappho), and the beastly Dryden. For there is no more deadly tool than good logic, honestly applied.

The essential enthymeme is simple and disarming: *Art is not Life; therefore it has nothing to do with life.* Is this not quite obvious? If it is

<sup>1</sup> L. H. Stimmel, "Our Ugly Contemporaries," *College English*, III, No. 5 (February, 1942), 454-59.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Johnson, "Preface to Shakespeare."

not obvious, and art is a part of life, it cannot be more sacred than, or exist apart from, life. And if we were to follow the leadership of science, we should begin to shout that whatever is important to men must be absorbed and understood, emotionally and intellectually. We should then be forced into the position that no element of existence or of experience could be shunned by the cultivated mind without a loss of social integrity. We should repeat that art must on occasion deal with the "frightful," and even with the "ugly," if it is to be anything besides a consolation and a toy. There are even those who say that the dialect of the common people is the source of a more serious literature than will be found in a *New Yorker* vignette and that the brutal (and, more important, the brutalizing) facts of the degradation, crime, and general misery which grow out of poverty are as fit material for art as the story of an incestuous king tearing his eyes out in a fury of masochistic retribution.

But then art must be pulled down from Olympus and onto the bloody plains of daily toil and struggle, of misery and "morbid" truth. It is on these plains that the modern artist—that sensitive compound of emotions, sensual tropisms, and intellectual honesty—is found. Here is a Thomas Mann, for instance, gravely descanting upon the process of bodily decomposition and human humiliation in such works as *The Blood of the Walsungs*, *The Magic Mountain*, and *Mario and the Magician*. Examine for a moment his *Death in Venice*: What is it but the story of a most unholy infatuation, on the part of a respectable, elderly man (an artist, at that), for a beautiful male child? Yet the structure of *Death in Venice*, when we consider the fashion in which the author has woven together with the plot a complete dialectic of his own and a subtle interpretation of Plato's *Phaedrus*, has within it all the elements of art. There are the careful craftsmanship, the subtle foreshadowing, the triumphant handling of the themes and counterthemes as they rise and recede, the control of words and rhythm—in short, all the elements that distinguish the highest artistry. Moreover, this artistry is more than mere technical skill, for from the sordid subject matter Mann has developed something sublime and moving. This achievement is absolute proof of the truth that there are no subjects important in human experience but unworthy of the artist's time. There can only be artists unworthy of their subjects.

But to turn more specifically to the works which Mr. Stimmel accuses of undue ugliness. In "Our Ugly Contemporaries" there is at least one statement which is incontrovertible: "*For Whom the Bell Tolls* is a picture of a revolution." It is that. How, then, escape the fact that a revolution is an ugly thing, full of towns destroyed, fields burned, and cities

leveled? And what sort of an artist is Hemingway that he should overlook the squalor and filth and cruelty of a war and portray it as a high-minded struggle between two ideals, conducted, presumably, with all the polite formality of a collegiate debate? The filth and cruelty was in Spain; it is no more than honest that it should be in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. But the book is not all ugliness. There are men and women there who represent, despite their weaknesses, man's highest promise; and even that bitterness of wars fails to subdue the naturally gregarious instincts in them, the triumphantly human traits which rise above the ugliness even of Guadalajara. Hemingway has had the humility to learn these facts from Malraux, the great teacher of faith in common humanity.

Or take the case of Bigger Thomas, slum born and tenement bred, trapped by a situation not of his own making, pursued by a doom not to be escaped—"a stranger," in short, "and afraid, in a world he never made," and not nearly so well equipped to deal with it as Housman to deal with his. There is, after all, not so much difference in quality between the doom which dogged Bigger Thomas and the doom which pursued Orestes. Nor, since we are talking of ugliness, was Orestes' crime a much prettier one than Bigger's. The tragedy is the same, in essence—Destiny, Eumenides, the electric chair—a man is trapped, and he reacts with the dignity which befits his station. For there is dignity in Bigger Thomas, and there is dignity in the death of El Sordo and his band on the hilltop; and in that dignity lies the beauty of the thing. The important element is not that ugliness is in the world; we know that. The important thing is that men keep rising above the ugliness, and the literature produced by that theme has at least more power and truth, if less "charm," than the lyricism of Pippa.

Nor can we say of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* or of *Native Son* that it is without art. In each case, again, we have the acid delineation of character, of circumstances, and of changing relationships, and the universality, the passions, and the powerful imagination possessed by the characters of the accepted classics. Or in *The Grapes of Wrath* (another work of "unnecessary ugliness")—are there not epic tasks, epic incidents, epic discoveries and disappointments, and even epic digressions? The day of the great adventure is not over because in Steinbeck men go in Fords rather than galleys. The terrible logic of *Oedipus* and *Crime and Punishment* is not vitiated in Richard Wright because his protagonist is an unhappy colored boy. The central figures in all these works are still confronted with serious problems of importance to all mankind and are in themselves "better than their kind"—that is to say (with Aristotle), leaders within their class.

What is it, then, that frightens us in this literature of modern realism? For it is not merely Mr. Stimmel who has expressed his dislike for some of our finest modern writers, but many scholars and critics, ranging from Professor Babbitt to Mr. Mencken, through the classrooms of many universities and the review columns of many periodicals. Why this marshaling of Pre-Raphaelite weapons, and why this attitude of frozen gentility on the part of men who know perfectly well that Addison's *Cato* and Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* have their limitations, and that the last ivory tower tore loose from its moorings a few years ago and shot skyward with a swish, with heaven its destination?

Is it a true aesthetic objection that asserts itself against Richard Wright and his fellows, or is it a simple fear of the complexity and violence of modern life? The authors of this essay submit that there is such a thing as aesthetic injustice, and that it consists in the rejection of entire genres because the critic cannot stomach the kind of human existence suggested by the ideas of such men as Darwin, Freud, and Marx, and by the presence of such phenomena as world-war, mass poverty, and fascism.

One point in conclusion. Mr. Stimmel ventures a speculation or two concerning the literary fate of the contemporary naturalists. They could meet a worse fate than that vouchsafed a spiritual ancestor of theirs by a modern American poet. E. A. Robinson's fine sonnet, "George Crabbe," concludes:

Whether or not we read him, we can feel  
From time to time the vigor of his name  
Against us like a finger for the shame  
And emptiness of what our souls reveal  
In books that are as altars where we kneel  
To consecrate the flicker, not the flame.

M. L. ROSENTHAL

W. C. HUMMEL

MICHIGAN STATE COLLEGE

## CURRENT ENGLISH FORUM

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*How many commas would be used in the sentence "He became ill January 15 1935 in Seattle Washington at his grandparents' home"? H. F. O.*

Everyone would put a comma after 15 and Seattle. Probably most people would also have commas after 1935 and Washington, though practice is no longer fully consistent in this.

P. G. PERRIN

*What shortened spellings are now accepted as good usage?*

A. C.

There are several hundred words for which simplified spellings have been devised, especially in American usage, in the years since Noah Webster first proposed to reform English spelling. They range from such universal forms as *public* and *music* to such rare forms as *staf* and *lether*. Practically all the shorter spellings that have the sanction of usage are listed in the *Webster's New International*, second edition, either as main entries (e.g., *program*), as variants (e.g., *cigaret*), or as rare forms at the bottom of the pages (e.g., *lether*). There is a good discussion of the subject of spelling reform in A. G. Kennedy's *Current English*, pages 589-603.

JAMES B. McMILLAN

*In a twelfth-grade workbook appeared the following sentence: "Only a (cultured, cultivated) person behaves as she does." The answer book gives "cultivated" as the correct choice. Why?*

P. A. L.

This bit of nonsense goes back to the dark ages of prescriptive grammar, when a theorizing grammarian decided that *cultured* was improper because there was no verb *culture* for *cultured* to come from. This grammarian didn't know (1) that the existence of a verb *to culture* has nothing whatsoever to do with the propriety of *cultured* and (2) that there was actually such a verb from which *cultured* was derived (it is marked "rare")

in the *Oxford English Dictionary*). Webster's lists *cultured* and *cultivated* as synonyms without comment. The author of the textbook apparently copied his exercise from some antiquated grammar without looking in twentieth-century dictionaries to ascertain the usage of *cultured*.

J. B. McM.

*Is the word "worth" so idiomatic that its uses cannot be analyzed usefully? Consider these sentences: "This is worth a dollar" and "This is well worth doing." What part of speech is "well" in the second sentence?*

T. E. C.

Jespersen (*Essentials*, p. 118) and Curme (*Syntax*, pp. 103 and 253) classify *worth* as the one English adjective which takes an object. Thus, in both sentences *worth* can be called an adjective, with *dollar* and *doing* as objects. This makes it easy to classify *well* in the second sentence as an adverb. Calling *worth* in these sentences an adjective with an object is equivalent to saying that its use is idiomatic and anomalous, but is better than refusing to classify it. For example, *well* and *doing* in the second sentence would be hard to classify except as anomalies if *worth* were called anything other than an adjective.

J. B. McM.

*In regard to the sentence "The jury (were, was) unable to agree on a verdict" (October "English Journal"), I should consider "was" a quite impossible choice. When you talk of a jury's agreeing or disagreeing, it is among themselves. You are therefore thinking of them as individuals, not as a body acting in unison.*

T. E. C.

Your logic is impeccable; and if the question is whether *was* or *were* is more logical, then *were* would be preferred. However, if the question is whether *was* or *were* is more correct, then logic is irrelevant. It is perfectly reasonable, of course, for an English teacher to object to expressions which are correct but illogical. But it is inevitably embarrassing to use logic as a criterion of correctness, since so much fundamental English syntax is illogical. The difference of opinion here is not to be settled by studying *jury was* but by discussing the standards used in evaluating words, and it seems to me that the argument dissolves when one writer is measuring logic, the other correctness.

J. B. McM.

## BOOKS

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### *THE OXFORD COMPANION TO AMERICAN LITERATURE<sup>1</sup>*

A big, weighty volume, almost ponderous enough for Ajax to hurl at Hector; a book that makes the prospective purchaser marvel at how many generous-sized, well-printed, attractively bound pages he is offered for his money!

The *Oxford Companion to American Literature*, this latest member of the series emanating from the Oxford Press, presents an enormous amount of information not merely about American belles-lettres but also about a multitude of affairs and men that have formed the American scene. Miscellaneous indeed is the throng that crowds Mr. Hart's omnibus. Traveling with such pundits as Paul Elmer More, Irving Babbitt, and William Carey Brownell may be found our national idols of the arena, beginning with John Heenan and thence through the royal succession of "John L.," "Gentleman Jim," "Jack" Dempsey, and "Sailor Gene." Here the omission of the reigning "Brown Bomber" is quite unpardonable.

This volume has been prepared to meet the needs of readers whose knowledge of American literature differs widely; and difficult it is to furnish adequately cafeteria literary service that will satisfy such a variety of attainments and tastes. On the whole, Mr. Hart has accomplished admirably his long and arduous task. His discussions of our chief American writers and of our principal literary movements are sane and well proportioned. The reader will welcome, too, the numerous summaries of the plots of novels, short stories, etc. These digests of such familiar poems as "The Raven" and of such short stories as "The Fall of the House of Usher" may, perhaps, be justified by the purpose of the book. Occasionally these seem lacking in "wim, vigor, and witality."

Students of the American essay will regret the omission of Charles S. Brooks and a half-dozen other excellent cultivators of this sensitive plant of the literary garden and might wish that these had been accorded some of the generous space granted to American history.

<sup>1</sup> By James D. Hart. New York: Oxford University Press, 1941. Pp. viii+888.  
\$5.00.

While one notes an occasional slip in facts—the 1938 edition of Ellen Glasgow is not her “Complete Works”—the volume shows commendable care in handling an enormous amount of material. An attractive volume, this—one that, like the dictionary, invites us to go on reading after we have secured the information for which we consulted the book; it is a ready helper in telling us succinctly Who is Who and What is What.

H. G. PAUL

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

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*THE ART OF READING POETRY*<sup>1</sup>

If we are to judge by the number of texts devoted to the understanding and appreciation of poetry that have recently been making their appearance, we may well conclude that the art of poetry has come to be regarded as both increasingly appealing to the general reader and increasingly baffling to him. Apparently, if this sort of reader, academic or otherwise, is to explore these realms of gold and find treasure there to reward his search, he must first equip himself with chart and compass. Otherwise, because of the hardships that confront him, he might become discouraged and forego the adventure altogether.

Charts and compasses of manifold design have been freely proffered to him of late, some of them so complicated and technical in themselves as to defeat their avowed purpose. But the text now before us,<sup>1</sup> addressing itself ingratiantly to such prospective travelers, offers them a reasonably simplified apparatus of guidance and throws in for good measure a palatable ration of encouragement. It is a book of good sense and good will.

“If poetry does no more than minister to leisure, refining and increasing the fun of life,” the author tells us, “it fulfills a high mission.” We may freely grant so modest a claim for poetry, recognizing its validity as a means of winning reluctant or timorous volunteers to a good cause, while reserving for ourselves (as the author does also) a faith in a far deeper conception of the values of this art. In another place we are given to understand that “poetry is, fundamentally, a record of pleasurable experience which the poet set down for the fun of it, that the reader might have fun in turn.” And immediately, for every true lover of poetry, there will come to mind poem after poem that he has cherished but that could hardly be accounted fun. It is, once more, the purpose of this text that must explain this apparently superficial attitude. The author is

<sup>1</sup> By Earl Daniels. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1941.

addressing himself to the beginner, not to the initiate. He fears to alienate him altogether if he offers him a program of blood, sweat, and tears.

Quite properly, therefore, the book adopts an agreeable title and a common-sense procedure. With a wealth of illustrative material drawn from a wide range of English and American poetry it treats of the fundamentals: the "stuff," the narrative element, the pictorial element, music, form, ideas. It opens with a persuasive invitation to the hesitant or fearful reader and soothes his alarm by admitting and avoiding the "lions in the path." The tone throughout is sympathetic and understanding both of the reader and of the subject.

In connection with a large number of the poems themselves, illuminating interpretations are offered; and with a still larger number, suggestive questions are appended for the student's own working-out. Now and again, in this connection, even an inexperienced reader of poetry might be disposed to question the implied criteria of taste and value, as when the author says: "Compare 'The Blessed Damozel' with 'The Eve of St. Agnes' which follows. What makes the latter a much superior poem?" But once more we remind ourselves that the book is planned for the beginner; and for him it may be well to speak on occasion in tones of authority.

The true missionary value of a book like this, in a field of service wherein missionary work is so desirable, commends it to all those of like faith with the author. It is an encouraging sign to find poetry, and the reading of poetry, regarded as an art, not as an intricate critical science.

R. A. JELLIFFE

OBERLIN COLLEGE

#### A FRESHMAN TEXT ON SCIENTIFIC PRINCIPLES

The commanding claim of its subtitle that *Fundamentals of College Composition*<sup>1</sup> is "a scientifically tested approach" rests upon the assertion in its Preface that space has been apportioned in accordance with "data of error-frequency." Not merely were the errors in twenty-eight thousand freshman themes recorded, but "nearly three million tabulations were made of errors in ten thousand college-placement tests given at a "cosmopolitan" institution over an interval of more than ten years.

Nearly four hundred pages of text are accordingly devoted chiefly to expository accounts of elementary constructions and elementary errors. Subsequent chapters (150 pages) deal with paragraphing, the forms of

<sup>1</sup> George MacKendrick Gregory and Archibald Currie Jordan, *Fundamentals of College Composition: A Scientifically Tested Approach*. New York: Henry Holt, 1941. Pp. vii+554. \$2.20.

writing, documentation, letters, rhetorical terms, prosody, semantics, and the library: how the apportionment of this space was determined is not clear.

The sufficiency of the data of the investigation, if the method of their selection was sound, is beyond both question and wonder. But no clue is given that a detailed account of the investigation and its findings has anywhere been published; and we must therefore blandly, though somewhat unscientifically, take both the findings and the general apportionment on faith. But not the basic predicates:

1. If in ten thousand placement tests ten thousand freshmen have chosen an incorrect synonym for *glabrous* ten thousand times, does it follow that the word will be misused ten thousand times in ten thousand themes? Or in twenty-eight thousand? Or in three million? In other words, has the apportionment of problems in the placement tests themselves been determined by a sufficient investigation of error-frequency in actual composition? If so, the new investigation seems unnecessary. If not, it must magnify all distortions in the placement tests.

2. Has it been shown that students endeavoring chiefly to avoid errors make fewer errors than students endeavoring to write effectively? And is freshman English properly a course in the elimination of errors or in effective writing?

3. Are the authors of placement tests, or the authors of textbooks, or standard usage as empirically studied by Curme, Fries, Jespersen, and other scholars, to decide when an error is an error and when it is not?

No mere excerpt could suggest the flavor of the discursive expository style. Illustrative material, however, generally consists of discrete facts about English literary history from Geoffrey of Monmouth to Robert Frost. On page 317 a typical sentence is developed through declarative, imperative ("Please tell me whether . . . ."), and interrogative variations of its structure to the exclamatory climax: "Would that the Battle of the Books had not taken place between 1690 and 1699!" When this device is not employed perhaps even greater distinctiveness is attained, as in the following exhibit from the illuminating chapter on "Rhetorical Terms":

ALLITERATION: Repetition of initial sounds.

Illustration: The sea ceaseth, and that sufficeth us.

ANACOLUTHON: A sudden break in a sentence.

Illustration: There are several things that—but  
why mention them?

A similar reflection brings this review to a close.

ANDREW J. GREEN

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

**WRITING AND READING ENGLISH PROSE<sup>1</sup>**

Several "complete courses in English composition" have appeared within the last two years. Here is another. If one desires this type of book, he would do well to examine *Writing and Reading English Prose*<sup>1</sup> carefully.

First, to describe it. The 850 pages are divided into two parts: "Composition and Rhetoric" and an "Anthology."

The first part (454 pages) consists of twenty chapters, which begin with an analysis of some of the students' writing difficulties—such as the problems of writing, choosing a subject, outlining, revision, word study, the consideration of the sentence and the paragraph. Then follow discussions of the four forms of discourse. These are succeeded by chapters on grammar, punctuation, spelling, letter-writing, and reports on reading. Each chapter is followed by questions for discussion and by exercises.

The second part, the "Anthology" (395 pages), consists of selections from authors from Bacon to the moderns, classified roughly as essays of various types, sketches, editorials, letters, and short stories from the Bible to Benét (nine of which are more or less contemporary).

First, to consider the merits of the book. The format is attractive. The chapters of the rhetoric are not pedantic; rather, the reverse—they are readable and interesting, even for a freshman. There are excellent chapters on "The First Draft and the Revision," "Words," and "The Paragraph." Too, all the chapters contain many excellent illustrations from writers of good prose. The anthology section, also, contains much material that would appeal to a youngster fresh from high school.

If we devote more space to the defects of the book than to the merits, let it be remembered that no completely satisfactory freshman book has ever been written—else, why are there so many on the market?

First, the authors have not escaped the well-nigh irresistible temptation to overclassify. Essays are divided as to types, and all writing is broken down into the four traditional categories: exposition, argumentation, narration, and description; the treatment of the short story is perhaps unnecessarily dogmatized and classified. (Should a freshman be made to write short stories at all?)

Second, though all instructors abhor "mechanics" and are not agreed as to the advisability of teaching grammar, the authors seem to have fallen between two stools. Grammar is treated in 25 hurried pages, which might

<sup>1</sup> Frederick Hard, Richard Ray Kirk, and Harvey Lee Marcoux, *Writing and Reading English Prose: A Complete Course in English Composition*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1941. Pp. 860. \$2.50.

mystify a student; all punctuation is oversimplified in 15 pages, so that the instructor might well have to fill in many gaps. (For example, restrictive clauses are "covered" in a footnote.)

Third, the Correction Chart does not seem easy for either instructor or student. (Though it must be remembered that the success of a chart lies in its usefulness, and the authors' system may, in practice, prove easily adaptable.)

Fourth, the short stories may offer some difficulty to freshmen, especially if these stories are to be used as models for their own writing.

Finally, the book will be difficult to teach if the chapters in Part I are taken up in consecutive order. If the freshman is to begin actual writing at once, as he is required to do in most freshman courses, he will have to read five chapters (43 pages)—replete with topics for discussion and exercises—before he even reaches the chapter on outlining. And he will be required to cover 84 more pages before he comes to a discussion of the sentence and the paragraph.

Nevertheless, the book is well worth the consideration of any teacher who wishes to consider another "super-omnibus" volume.

DOUGLAS BEMENT

DIRECTOR OF DIVISION OF COMPOSITION  
AND CREATIVE WRITING  
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SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

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#### VOICES OF LIBERTY\*

Psychology may not be their major field, but Finley M. K. Foster, of Western Reserve University, and Homer A. Watt, of New York University, show either that they are masters of the subject or that they have intuited a good deal of it in their recent publication, *Voices of Liberty*.

*Voices of Liberty* is one of several dozen recently published anthologies that are intended to stir the heart of maiden and youth to deep feelings of patriotism, but one wishes that this were not true. The shrewdness and obvious sincerity with which Foster and Watt have assembled their selections inspire the wish that the book were not a mere answer to popular demand for right-wing propaganda. One may call *Voices of Liberty* propaganda if one wishes, but it is that only in the very highest sense of the term.

\* By Finley M. K. Foster and Homer A. Watt. New York: Macmillan Co., 1941.  
Pp. xii+613.

The book is not a mere collection of public addresses and platitudinous hokum produced by the unfortunately famous stuffed shirts of the past. The older ones among us cannot remember without disgust the literary patent medicine that was jammed down students' throats during the last war. *Voices of Liberty* compares to them as Whitman to Eddie Guest.

Inside the front cover is printed a reproduction of the Magna Carta. Inside the back cover one finds a reproduction of the Declaration of Independence.

Between the covers is an expertly selected anthology of essays, speeches, and stories. In Part I documents in the history of the democratic tradition are more or less alternated with standard accounts of some of the more heroic struggles for the achievement of Anglo-Saxon ideals. Macaulay's essay, "The Natural Liberalism of the English," and Green's account of "The Great Charter" are followed by Froude's "Defeat of the Armada" and Raleigh's "The Last Fight of the *Revenge*." Thus the student whose capacity for serious discussion is limited is intellectually revived and nourished by thrilling narratives.

Many students will, however, fight slumber in their progress through Milton's "Areopagitica," and Locke's "Of Conquest." But perhaps the compilers feel that there are certain writings which the student should be required to read, whether he likes them or not, because they give him an understanding of what his country stands for.

The book begins to sparkle, though, in Parts III and IV, in which the compilers present selections of biography and fiction dealing with the American scene and the American character. More here than in the first half of the book the compilers seem to have readers in mind. Such things as Carl Schurz's "First Years in America," Mark Twain's "A Daring Deed," and Hamlin Garland's "The Return of a Private" not only are good reading but give the student a feeling for America, a sense of partnership in Americanism that no quantity of state papers and political orations can ever give.

On the whole, the book may be a little difficult for some freshmen, which may, indeed, be in its favor, but few students will be able to read even half of it without experiencing a new reverence and respect for the American ideology and for literature itself. Even a communist would be forced to admit that *Voices of Liberty* is a good book.

E. T. GRIEBLING

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## LANGUAGE HABITS

Both of these volumes<sup>1</sup> are in a sense popularizations of previous, more esoteric work. Walpole's discussion of semantics is indebted to *The Meaning of Meaning* written by I. A. Richards in collaboration with C. K. Ogden (New York, 1923), and it is introduced by Richards with a few pats of appreciation. Lee's book derives from the ambitious *Science and Sanity* of Alfred Korzybski (Lancaster, 1933; 2d ed., 1941) and contains a brief foreword by the latter. Walpole and Lee are alike frank in their acknowledgment of debt, and they show distinct competence in their similar tasks.

Walpole limits himself, as the subtitle indicates, to problems in the art of definition. After explaining and clearly discriminating the terms "sign" and "symbol," he reproduces the "semantic triangle" of Ogden and Richards. This is a graphic presentation of the three-cornered relationship involving the "word" (or sound-symbol) used in speech, the "referent" or object to which it refers, and the "reference" or thought, emotions, memories, and so on, evoked in a hearer's mind when he hears the word. Walpole makes the triangle even more graphic than did his predecessors and expounds it in language of luminous simplicity. He then suggests twenty-five "routes" or methods of defining, points out the uses and abuses of metaphor, and concludes with a eulogy of Basic English as a tool for sharpening definitions, since it makes possible a translation of terms from one type of English into another. His text is studded with examples and with warnings, such as the familiar one so stressed by Korzybski: "The word is not the thing."

Korzybski's work, being more pretentious, may well have offered more difficulty to the popularizer. Irving J. Lee has put it before us in readable English. Stripped of the multiple examples and repetitions for emphasis, the principles which emerge are extremely simple. We are assured in many ingenious periphrases that the word is merely a label and belongs on a purely verbal level of experience which Lee rather awkwardly terms "life-facts." We are told that no two objects in nature are identical and that implications of identity in the use of "is" are therefore misleading. Points such as these are driven home by means of engaging, simple diagrams. We are reminded that all things are in a state of flux; that the most solid object is really a process rather than a thing; that, therefore, all creatures must differ from one time to another.

<sup>1</sup> Hugh R. Walpole, *Semantics: The Nature of Words and Their Meanings*. New York: W. W. Norton, Inc., 1941. Pp. 264.

Irving J. Lee, *Language Habits in Human Affairs*. New York: Harper & Bros., 1941. Pp. xxvii+278.

This is what Korzybski calls being non-Aristotelian. Actually, some of the most ponderous and polysyllabic formulations reduce themselves upon examination to truisms. In simplifying them Lee has often, perhaps unconsciously, made their obviousness apparent. This is not the place to enter upon a detailed critique of Korzybski, whose claims to have discovered a new science in "general semantics" have been widely advertised. Suffice it to say that Lee has simplified the language and the principles of his master but has kept the same substance and even many of the same examples. Once again we learn that Smith I is not Smith II, that Smith on Tuesday is not the same as Smith on Monday. We even hear again the story of the man who suffered an attack of hay fever when he saw pictured flowers. Both master and disciple show a tendency to explain social and political problems entirely by psycho-linguistic principles—if I may be permitted to create a word after the manner of Korzybski himself. The exposition of Hitler and National Socialism in the new edition of *Science and Sanity* is an example in point. Lee also shares with Korzybski a passion for the citation of authority. What is contained in the text between the quotations interspersed in *Language Habits* can be reduced to a modest contribution clearly and easily phrased by a skilled adapter.

There is a certain value in these expositions for teachers of English. Awareness of semantic problems will no doubt be acquired and imparted by the reader of them. But there is more than a little danger in the implicit assumption that our major problems today can be solved by charting the routes of definition or mastering the truisms of "general semantics," salutary as these may be. An illusion of this sort, which is fostered by the general claims of Korzybski's school, can only hamper us in the high struggle in which we are all engaged at present and which demands, alas, many other weapons besides the scrupulous treatment of verbal labels.

MARGARET SCHLAUCH

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

## IN BRIEF REVIEW

[Mention under this head does not preclude review elsewhere.]

## FOR THE GENERAL READER

*The Moon Is Down.* By John Steinbeck. Viking. \$2.00.

Jaded readers of lengthy novels will rejoice in the disciplined restraint of this novel. The scene is any conquered country under enemy occupation, and any freedom-loving people are the characters. Mayor Arden, the doctor, the servants, and townspeople, Steinbeck believes—as do we—are always with us. No less interesting is the light in which he sees the hated conquerors and the despised fifth-column promoter. Heartening are the simple words of Mayor Arden: "I am a little man and this is a little town, but there must be a spark in little men that can burst into flame."

*Flight to Arras.* By Antoine de Saint Exupery. Reynal & Hitchcock. \$2.75.

Creed of Antoine de Saint Exupery: "Therefore I shall fight against all those who strive to impose a particular way of life upon other ways of life, a particular people upon other peoples, a particular race upon other races, a particular system of thought upon other systems of thought." May his tribe increase!

In May, 1940, knowing that defeat for France was certain, her fliers carried on. "Why, in the midst of defeat, do I and my kind continue to take the risk of death?" the author asks. A reflective, gripping account of what men do and think when fighting for our future, fully as moving as his *Wind, Sand and Stars*, and handsomely illustrated.

*All-Out on the Road to Smolensk.* By Erskine Caldwell. Duell, Sloan & Pearce. \$2.50.

Early in 1941, wishing to see Moscow before the German attack, Caldwell went to Russia. He tells the full uncensored story of what he saw there. This is a study of the Soviet Union and of Russia at war. "After seeing the Russians in action during the first week of war, I never for a moment doubted their ability to stop the Germans." The author is a trained observer and a powerful writer who values clear, concise statements of facts.

*Only One Storm.* By Granville Hicks. Macmillan. \$2.75.

Say New Englanders: "There's only one storm that never cleared up and that's this one." The author, well-known leftist critic, turns to fiction to say something that he believes he can best express in a novel. It is the "talk" which makes this book significant. A successful young advertising executive in New York, Kittredge Canby, became disgusted with his life, and with his family returned to the Berkshire village of his forebears. Hick's purpose is to present a cross-section of American life and to show what awakening people talk about when two or more get together. There are many villagers, communists, and New Yorkers; all classes are represented.

*Men Do Not Weep.* By Beverley Nichols. Harcourt. \$2.50.

A pre-war pacifist presents nine semi-autobiographical stories, progressive in time, telling of his efforts to promote peace and Anglo-German friendship, and what happens

when pacifist theories are tested. Lunch with Ribbentrop, talks with Hitler accomplices at Munich and with victims of the Gestapo, and concentration camps—fear and hatred shadowing every life—all enter into these stories belying the title of the book. Although enlivened with Nichols wit and irony—"swaggering space" instead of "living space," for instance—these are among the most terror-inspiring recent stories of fascism.

*Sam Small Flies Again.* By Eric Knight. Harper. \$2.50.

The Flying Yorkshireman, a folk character of the shire where Knight was born and known to all natives as Sam Small, is a bit like our own Paul Bunyan. The author believes that in times like these we fall back, for strength and sanity, on our "blood and background." The imaginative writing in these tales of a shrewd, stubborn Yorkshireman is universal in character and very stimulating.

*Bride of Glory.* By Bradda Field. Greystone. \$3.00.

A Literary Guild selection for March. Colorful, adventurous, and richly human, this amazing tale of the servant girl who became Lady Hamilton, loved by Admiral Nelson, is escape reading but well worth while.

*Timber: A Novel of Pacific Coast Loggers.* By Roderick L. Haig-Brown. Morrow. \$2.75.

An excellent story of the lumbermen who work in the deep fir and cedar forests of the Northwest. Fascinating reading—as was the author's earlier *Return to the River*.

*Tap Roots.* By James Street. Dial. \$2.75.

This lengthy novel continues the story of the Dabney family of *Oh Promised Land*. A story of strong, courageous, greedy men and women who knew what they wanted and got it.

*The Best One-Act Plays of 1941.* Edited by Margaret Mayorga. Dodd, Mead. \$2.50.

Suitable for amateur production and tending toward appreciation of democracy, its preservation and development. Represented are such well-known authors as Archibald MacLeish, Saroyan, Maxwell Anderson, and Ben Hecht.

*There Will Be Bread and Love.* By Robert P. Tristram Coffin. Macmillan. \$2.00.

More than seventy poems, reminiscences of boyhood and homely Maine life.

*A Home in the Country.* By Frederic F. Van de Water. Day. \$2.50.

A revised and enlarged edition of a popular "back to the land" book.

*Smoke and Steel: Slabs of the Sunburnt West: Good Morning, America.* By Carl Sandburg. Harcourt. \$3.50.

Three previously published books now appear in one volume with a preface by the author in which he discusses the poet's relation to his work and to his audience. Of particular interest are his advice to young writers and his arguments for free verse.

*Awake! And Other Wartime Poems.* By W. R. Rodgers. Harcourt. \$1.50.

Both Mark Van Doren and G. W. Stonier believe that Rodgers is the "war poet of this war."

"So war came,  
The late and urgent agent of Change, not  
Of Chance. So will it always come to wake  
The deep sleepers."

*Gautama the Enlightened and Other Verse.* By John Masefield. \$1.60.

Four new poems: two modern in theme and two presenting old legends.

*Sixteen Famous British Plays.* Compiled by Bennett A. Cerf and Van H. Cartmell. Introduction by John Mason Brown. Garden City. \$1.98.

Brown, in his Introduction, says that the editors have endeavored, in selecting these sixteen plays written since the modern English theater came of age, to exhibit not only the quality and variety of that drama but also the characteristics of some of the major British dramatists. The first play is *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray; The Corn Is Green*, the last.

*Progress to Freedom: The Story of American Education.* By Agnes E. Benedict. Putnam. \$3.00.

Of interest to both educators and general reader is this complete history of education in America from the earliest log schoolhouse to the schools of the present day. Advantages, improvements, possibilities, mistakes, and failures are discussed.

*The English Novel in Transition, 1885-1940.* By William C. Frierson. University of Oklahoma. \$3.00.

An excellent study of the development of the modern English novel with special treatment of fifty important moderns and a discussion of American, Russian, and French influences.

*The Foreigners.* By Preston Schoyer. Dodd, Mead. \$2.75.

A very long (why?), absorbing novel about a young American teacher in China who experiences a growing respect and admiration for the Chinese. He becomes involved in the war with Japan.

*Weather and the Ocean of Air.* By Major William H. Wenstrom. Houghton. \$4.50.

The war has directed our attention to the importance of the science of weather forecasting. This finely illustrated volume gives practical information.

*Commodore Vanderbilt: An Epic of the Steam Age.* By Wheaton J. Lane. Knopf. \$3.75.

This handsome volume by the winner of a Knopf Fellowship is a constructive biography of a man whose life spanned an age of buccaneering.

*Our Hawaii.* By Erna Ferguson. Knopf. \$3.50.

Not a war book, but timely in its general and wide information concerning Hawaii and all aspects of her past and present history and her relation to the rest of the world.

*Philippine Emergency.* By Catherine Porter. Knopf. \$1.00.

This history of the islands, the racial problems, difficulties of defense, and the beginning of the war, with two highway and industrial maps, was written under the direction of the Institute of Pacific Relations and is distributed to army officers.

*Admiral of the Ocean Sea: A Life of Christopher Columbus.* By Samuel E. Morison. Atlantic, \$3.50.

This monumental biography was originally planned for two volumes, but it has been abridged for general reading by the omission of technical material. Its account of the difficulties Columbus faced differs radically from popular tradition. Book-of-the-Month selection for March.

*Book of Bays.* By William Beebe. Harcourt. \$3.50.

The great adventurer-explorer and writer of scientific research of sea and jungle life is at his best in telling these fascinating stories of the fairy-like deep-sea dwellers. For five months he sailed the southern Pacific coast on the Thirty-eighth Expedition of Tropical Research of the New York Zoological Society. There are beautiful pictures of both land and water creatures and many curious facts about their lives and habitats.

*Amerigo: A Comedy of Errors in History.* By Stefan Zweig. Viking. \$2.00.

The author has made an exhaustive study of life and personality of Amerigo Vespucci and the coincidence by which our country was given the name America. His picture of the Middle Ages and the background of both Columbus and Vespucci in his study of that "Comedy of Errors" is clear and concise. *Amerigo* is an excellent and instructive tale.

*The Broken Span*, by William Carlos Williams; *Some Poems and a Devotion*, by John Donne; *The End of a Decade*, by Harry Brown; *A Letter from the Country*, by Howard Baker; *The Paradox in the Circle*, by Theodore Spencer; *Selected Poems*, by John Wheelwright; *Poems on Several Occasions*, by Josephine Miles; *Shenandoah*, by Delmore Schwartz; *More Poems from the Palatine Anthology*, by Dudley Fitts; *The Dry Season*, by Malcomb Cowley; *Poems*, by F. T. Prince; *Poems from the Book of Hours*, by Rainer Maria Rilke, translated by Babette Deutsch. ("Poet of the Month: A Series of Poetry Pamphlets.") New Directions. Twelve issues, by yearly subscription, \$4.00 in pamphlet style (\$0.35 each); \$10 in stiff bindings (\$1.00 each).

The publications of "The Poet of the Month" series for the first year are successful as an experiment in bookmaking at low cost and impressive in the individuality and variety of the different volumes. The pamphlets are each of thirty-two pages, artistically printed on fine paper, and each is the work of a different press. Four of the pamphlets are outside the span of contemporary American poets: the selection of favorite lyrics by Donne, the new translation of some early poems by Rilke, the epigrams from *The Palatine* (or *Greek*) *Anthology*, and the selection from the contemporary English poet, F. T. Prince. The American poets are very different from one another in philosophy, literary school, subject matter, and technique, and all of them are eminently readable. Spencer writes metaphysical poems in singing rhythms; Williams continues to be an imagist, in lively colloquialism; Josephine Miles writes about subjects like "Modern Dance Program: American Document" colorfully and with much novelty. Whee-

wright is perhaps the most cryptic of the group, but his rough realism makes one willing to grapple with the obscurity. Delmore Schwartz's *Shenandoah*, a verse play on the naming of a child, is a fantasia of tumbling mores and troubled emotions.

#### FOR THE INSTRUCTOR

*Poetry as a Means of Grace*. By Charles Grosvenor Osgood. Princeton University Press. \$2.00.

Only by choosing your poet and slowly sounding his depths, year in and year out, can you deploy and economize the vast resources of secular literature. This is the premise on which Mr. Osgood, who is distinguished both as scholar and as essayist, has written an appreciation of four great authors: Dante, Spenser, Milton, and Johnson.

*The Language of Poetry*. By Philip Wheelwright, Cleanth Brooks, I. A. Richards, and Wallace Stevens. Edited by Allen Tate. Princeton University Press. \$2.00.

Four distinguished critics explain, respectively, the language of poetry as the language of myth and reality, the language of paradox, the interactions of words, and the sounds of words by means of which reality is interfused with nobility. Deftly interpreted illustrations in all four essays help to make the book absorbing.

*The Literary Lineage of the King James Bible, 1340-1600*. By Charles C. Butterworth. University of Pennsylvania Press. \$3.50.

Mr. Butterworth gives an account of the circumstances in which the successive translations of the Bible were made and published up to the Authorized Version. After following the historical development of the Bible in English, he distinguishes the earlier contributions from those made by the King James translators.

*Victorian Prelude*. By Maurice J. Quinlan. Columbia University Press. \$3.00.

A history of English manners from 1800 to 1830. Mr. Quinlan traces the development of such concepts as the model female and the Victorian theories of censorship and reform, relating the rise of Victorianism to the economic changes of the period.

*The Eighteenth Century Background*. By Basil Willey. Columbia University Press. \$3.25.

A history of ideas in the eighteenth century of which the theme is the idea of nature—in religion, ethics, philosophy, and politics. Beginning with "The Wisdom of God in the Creation," Mr. Willey guides one through the major philosophers of the period and concludes with "Nature in Revolution . . . , or the concept of nature as it appears in the writings of Godwin and Wordsworth.

*Directions in Contemporary Literature*. By Philo M. Buck, Jr. Oxford University Press. \$2.25.

In his Preface, Mr. Buck explains that the fifteen chapters of this volume were written during a vacation which took in most of the seven seas and all but one of the continents. He has recorded and commented upon the visions to be found in the writings of such different contemporaries as Santayana, Gide, O'Neill, and Hitler, whom he relates to some of their predecessors in European literature. In the work of the representative contemporaries Mr. Buck finds that one is not oppressed by a sense of meaningless confusion but rather is inspired by a glow of respect and hope.

*Radio Extension Courses Broadcast for Credit.* By Carroll Atkinson. Meador. \$1.50.

Thirteen American universities and colleges have tried the plan of broadcasting for credit. Dr. Atkinson compares these experiences and explains why the plan has usually failed. Attempts to broadcast for credit are being continued, but Dr. Atkinson believes that if they are successful, students will have to develop an interest in knowledge for its own sake and instructors will have to become dynamic.

*American Universities and Colleges That Have Held Broadcast License.* By Carroll Atkinson. Meador. \$1.50.

This volume describes the ups and downs of college broadcasting, by means of either privately or commercially owned stations. One hundred and twenty-four American colleges and universities have held licenses; thirty still operate their own stations. Dr. Atkinson describes in some detail the unusual program services as well as the more common services which have developed over a period of two decades.

*The Novel and Society.* By N. Elizabeth Monroe. University of North Carolina Press. \$3.00.

Miss Monroe believes that the novel must embody universals and that a genuine moral or religious conviction is the basis of artistic seriousness. In her judgment the novel of today is defective; it lacks artistic seriousness. Most of *The Novel and Society* is devoted to studies of Undset, Lagerlöf, Wharton, Glasgow, Woolf, and Cather, because the "responses of these women to their environment have . . . helped to preserve human values in a world dedicated to materialism and imbued with a sense of disillusionment."

#### FOR THE STUDENT

*Speech Forms and Principles.* By Andred Thomas Weaver. Longmans, Green. \$2.75.

A comprehensive guide to effective speaking, in conversation and conference, before large audiences and through the microphone. The section on principles and techniques—vocal, psychological, and intellectual—is detailed. Photographs of speakers in action from Bryan to Jack Benny with ingenious questions on their visible methods are an attractive feature of the book.

*Selected Reading in Rhetoric and Public Speaking.* Edited by Lester Thomssen. Wilson. \$3.00.

This is an anthology of rhetorical theory from Plato to Genung, with excerpts from twenty-three authors. It is designed as a reference book for courses in public speaking, rhetorical criticism, rhetorical theory, and the teaching of speech.

*Life in Eighteenth Century England.* By Robert J. Allen. Boston: Museum Extension Publications, Museum of Fine Arts. \$5.20; to subscribers, \$4.20.

This, the fourth, "Illustrative Set" of Museum Extension Publications contains forty-two large plates, with explanatory captions, which have been made from paintings, photographs, and drawings. The plates are clear and forceful throughout. Mr. Allen has assembled a variety of realistic pictures of eighteenth-century buildings, customs, social situations, and personages which is valuable to any student of the period.

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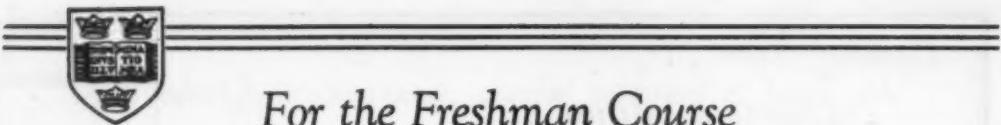
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